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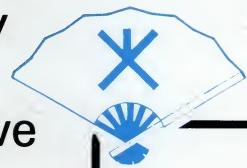
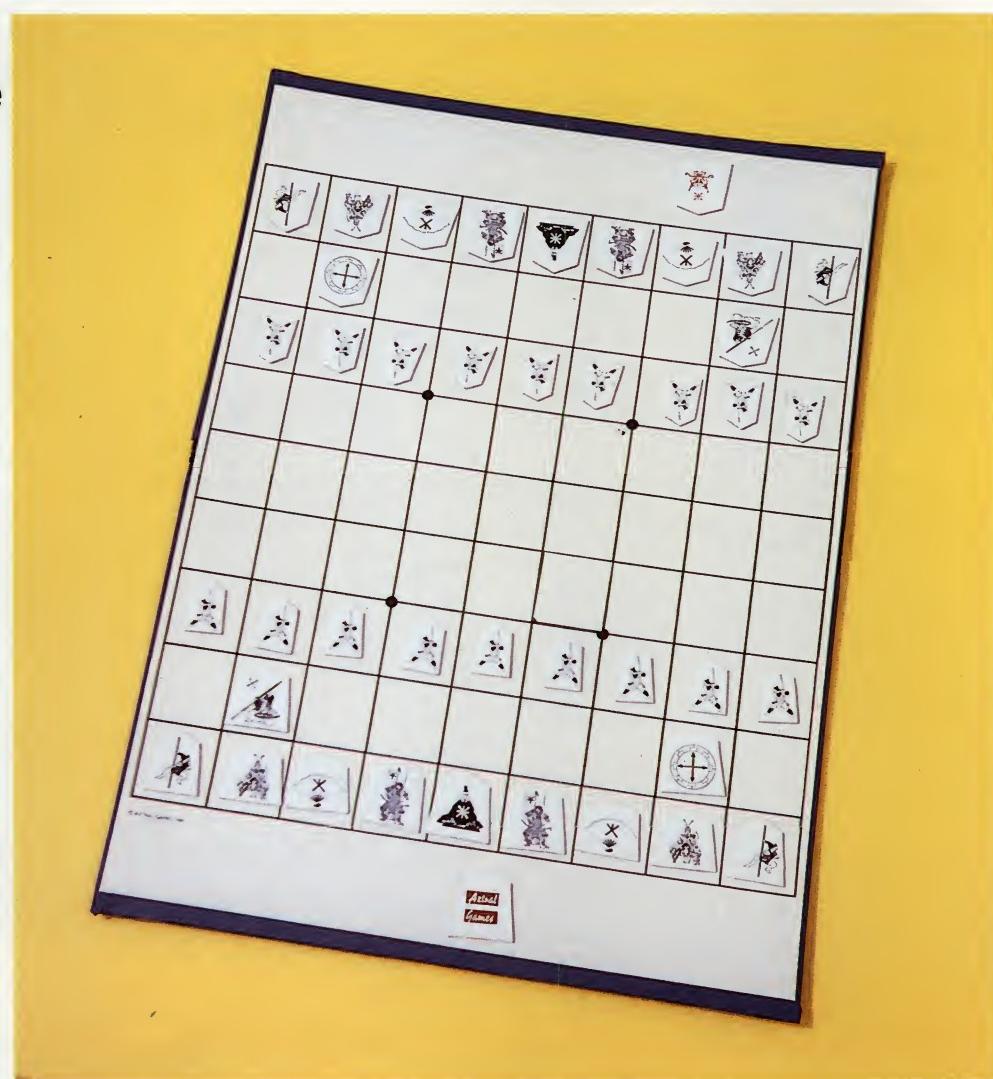
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UPFRONT

The question of what should, or should not, merit a five star review has been raised recently both by our writers and readers. Any rating system is bound to be subjective and ours is no exception. By and large we take into consideration the overall tone of the review and compare it with the definitions which appear at the start of the review section. Sometimes this may mean adding or subtracting half a star, but nothing more.

As to what should receive the ultimate accolade, basically we are left with two choices. Do we wait until a game is dead and buried (and ready for the R.I.P. feature) before singing its praises? To do so, of course, would be to follow a great English tradition of giving posthumous awards to works which were studiously ignored during their own lifetime. Artists and writers (hullo, Oscar Wilde) were the chief sufferers from this philosophy, which owes as much to English conservatism as it does to philistinism. Of course, it could be argued (but not by us) that a game, like any other creative article, should be made to stand the test of time before it can properly be evaluated. The second option is to stick our necks out and give the living their due while they are still around to enjoy it, and who knows, maybe even prolong their life a little bit? Quite honestly, it is this course we choose.

To a certain extent this policy has been vindicated by the cult success of **6-Tage Rennen**, already acknowledged as a classic and yet a game that was, and still is, severely underestimated in its homeland. Perhaps they are suffering from the 'British Disease', and waiting until it goes the way of its predecessor, **Homas Tour**, before recognising its merits? Not that we are infallible. Doubtless in the 25th century readers will be skimming through the back issues and scoffing; 'What a right bunch of wallies those geezers at *Games International* must have been. Fancy giving **Buck Rogers** a five star review.'

Sometimes you just can't win.

NO ORGIES PLEASE . . .

The news that several games companies have gone bust is good news for no one. In some cases though, they only have themselves to blame; shoddy component quality, poor play value, and lack of orig-

inality have all contributed to the current state of the market. What, though, is one to make of the demise of Comissatio who produced **Orgy**? This was a company that seemingly did everything right, at least in terms of marketing. The problem here was the trade buyers, who decided that the game's title was far too *risqué* to be displayed on squeaky clean shopping mall shelves. AIDS, and the 'current moral climate' were also given as reasons for rejection. What humbug! The logic here is mind boggling: that a game somehow not only encourages the participants to hop into bed with one another willy nilly (sorry) and thus contract social diseases, but also contributes to the moral downfall of the nation.

The only trick (whoops) that Comissatio missed, as far as I can see, was not to go the whole hog and include a free packet of condoms with the game, a move which I feel sure would have had the sex starved masses beating down, if not the doors, then at least the plate glass windows of the hideous malls in their efforts to obtain a copy. What's the betting that a *Satanic Verses* style U-Turn would then have been enacted, and that the game would have been on the shelves quicker than you could say bonk? Hell hath no fury like a buyer on the trail of a buck. AIDS, or no.

SAVE THAT SPECIES

Barely a day goes without us getting a call along the lines of: 'I've got this wonderful game but none of the big companies are interested. Do you have any advice as to what I should do next?' Sadly, we are not usually able to offer any encouragement. This is no reflection on the game, indeed some of the offerings we have seen far outclass anything currently on the market. Unfortunately, as we have said before, content appears to count for little in the current UK market. This is the age of marketing man, most of whom wouldn't know a good game from a block of wood. Their present, and hopefully temporary, dominance does not mean that games inventors are an extinct breed. Like many exotic animals, they are desperately in need of a preservation order so that they may thrive when the new dawn approaches. Their day will come.

ERRATA

Owing to a communication breakdown our **Britannia** variant - Bidding for Blood - in the last issue contained an error. It should have read 'divide 400 points between the number of players to determine the number of bidding points available. Thus in a 4 player game each player would start with a 100 bidding points.'

Our apologies for any inconvenience caused, and for any major invasions gone awry as a result.

REVIEW SECTION

Plenty of variety this month with **Onslaught** topping the heap. A 'classic' according to Norman Smith. Of course this is not exactly a 'new' game, but one which we feel has never received its due in the UK, so let's not get pedantic.

Attempting to live up to our title, from Germany we bring you **Maestro**, **Der Ausreisser**, **Enchanted Forest**, **Ave Caesar** and **New York, New York**. The latter is a card player's delight. Holland chips in with **Targui** and **City**.

Welcome back Eric Solomon, best known for **Sigma File**. In the first of an occasional series, Eric looks at some of the new abstract games on the market.

Star Ratings

Top class game. Highly recommended

Very good game. Worth buying

Worth a look

**

Only if the subject interests you

*

A true turkey

NEXT ISSUE

Empire Builder special: a new expansion kit for this classic game.

Murder! John Harrington investigates the latest thing at parties.

REVIEWS

GENERAL GAMES

AVE CAESAR

DESIGNED BY
WOLFGANG REIDESSER

PUBLISHED BY
RAVENSBURGER

PRICE £24.95

**

This year's range of German games has taken some heavy critical flak from the press. Chief recipient of the bombardment has been Ravensburger, for so long the market leaders in their field. Have the Germans acquired the British disease of building up heroes simply to pull them down, we ask? On the basis of Ave Caesar (Hail Caesar), the answer must be a firm no.

The packaging and components are seductive; top quality double sided playing board, detailed plastic chariots, good quality cards, all beautifully laid out in a glamorous chocolate box. Unfortunately though, there is a bland soft centre at the heart of the package, as quickly became evident after our first game.

Play consists of a three lap chariot race; play a card, move, if you can't move the full distance you don't move at all. The only variation comes when you have to pay your respects to Caesar by handing in a coin which is done by travelling down a special lane. There are some blocking tactics, but none that would escape the attention of an eight year old after a round of play. Curious, then, that the game arrives with a '12 and up' tag. Stranger still, when you consider the subject matter, is that the game contains no violence. A chariot race without mayhem is like Laurel without Hardy. Surely there should have been some allowance for whipping, or dragging a half dead driver round the track? Where's the harm in that? The answer to these questions lies, of course,

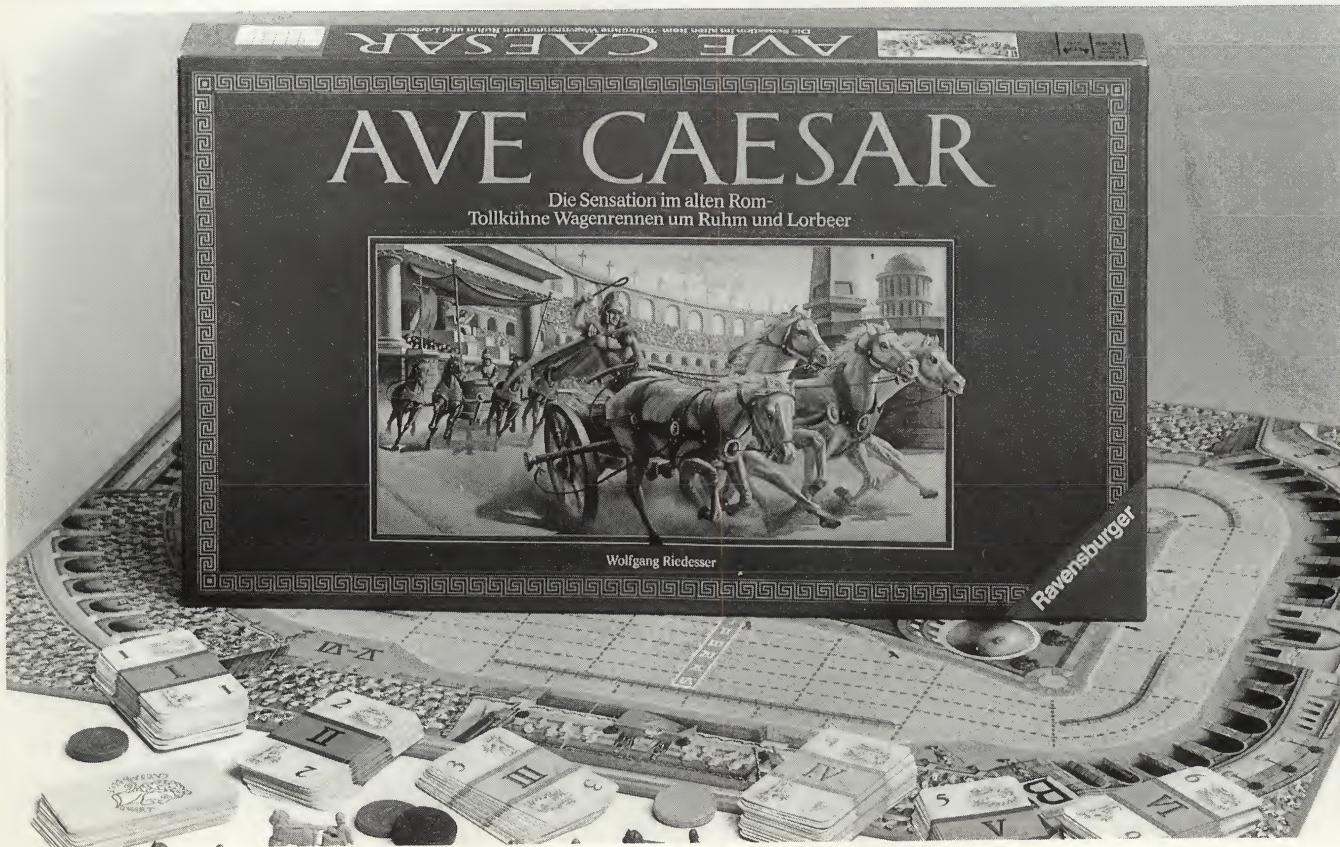
in the German attitude to violence, an attitude which manifests itself in game design (Ravensburger guidelines to designers expressly forbid the use of violence in their games) and which is diametrically opposed to American views on the same subject. The reasons for this are both historical (the *angst* after two world wars) and current (the growth of the peace/green movement). And while such a philosophy is commendable, it leaves games like Ave Caesar up the Tiber without a paddle.

Our normal definition for a two star rating is 'only if you are interested in the subject'. In this case modify that to read: 'only if you have designed a similar game yourself and are looking for some decent components'.

The game is for 3–6 players. Playing time is around one hour for four races.

Brian Walker

Available from Just Games with English rules.



NEW YORK NEW YORK

DESIGNED BY
WOLFGANG KRAMER

PUBLISHED BY
FX SCHMID

PRICE £7.95

New York, New York, so good they named it twice. Scorsese even made a flick of the same name. The film was kind of so-so; happily the game is much better. Although a card game, the word 'card' is something of a misnomer. What you get here are numbered rectangular tiles, each of which depicts part of the Manhattan skyline.

The object of the game is to construct the complete skyline and ensure that your colour group is on top of the heap. After

choosing a colour, each player gets dealt six tiles. Six more are placed in a pool. In turn, each player lays a tile then selects one from the pool. The latter is immediately replenished from the deck. You may lay one of your opponents tiles or your own. The same applies when drawing from the pool. If you play a tile and that number has already been laid, then you lay the new tile on top. At the end of a round only the top tiles score. Points are also acquired by having your colour group in sequence. When a player thinks he has enough points he may 'pass', but such a pass is final.

Very simple, then, but quite tricky. Knowing which tile to choose and place is very important, as is deciding when to pass. As this review makes clear (with any luck) the game can be explained in less than a minute, and yet sustains interest for a considerable period.

For a one hour game with four players, a victory total of about 150 points should be set. Even better, though, is that you play an even number of rounds as there appears to be a distinct advantage in going last. The game plays equally well with two, three, or four players, for no matter what the complement all the tiles are used.



Although minimal, the components are of a quality one has come to expect from the Germans; the tiles are quite beautiful when laid out and offer a flattering panorama of the Big Apple. Of course, it is possible to play the game using an ordinary pack of cards, but only a philistine or cheapskate would want to. If you're a card player, buy this game. If you're not a card player, still buy this game. New York, New York. They were right.

Brian Walker

MAESTRO

DESIGNED BY
RUDI HOFFMAN

PUBLISHED BY
HANS IM GLÜCK

PRICE £14

***½

phrase though, and one that does not do justice to his latest effort.

BAND ON THE RUN

The playing board consists of ten orchestras of varying size, and instruments. The objective is to fill these orchestras with musicians from your theatrical agency. Each player starts with a maestro which is placed on the '10' space on the card re-

presenting his agency. On his turn a player may place one or more matching musicians in an orchestra providing that orchestra contains the presence of a maestro, and the musicians placed form a continuous line. Each musician placed scores 5 points, though if you are able to lay down a complete orchestra you score double for each musician. Or, if you simply add the final musician to an orchestra, you collect the critic, the presence of



DÉJÀ VU

The name Rudi Hoffman may be more familiar to readers as the designer of Ogalalla, or Blackfoot as it was re-christened by Waddingtons. This new game bears some resemblance to the aforementioned, indeed, many of his games seem to be a variation on a theme. Café International, released by Mattel (Germany) recently is yet another example of his heavy reliance on what might be termed 'pattern recognition'. A rather boring

whom assures you of an extra ten points for every turn he is in your possession.

PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG

The chorus consists of drawing 1–3 new musicians from the bag and placing them in your agency. However, just where to place them is one of the cornerstones of the game. If you place them in the top line (numbered 1 to 5) they are considered to be free agents and can be filched by your opponents. If you place them in the bottom line (numbered 5 to 10) they are yours for life, but unfortunately if you have not found gainful employment for them by the end of a round they cost you

the number of points equal to the space on which they have been situated. In addition to musicians you may also find you draw applause markers from the bag. These are a rather clever method of determining the game length; when fourteen have been drawn the round ends.

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER

Being able to steal other musicians gives the game a vital interactive element normally absent from these type of games. We found the game to be fun to play and quite skilful, though not something you'd want to spend all night over. A victory point total of 250 points should take about

one hour, which is just about right. The component quality and artwork is quite splendid; each orchestra is listed as playing a particular piece, from a Bach sonata to Laura Brannigan's *Take Me*, while the translated rules are as clear as a Miles Davis solo on CD. *Maestro* was designed to be played by a duo, trio, or quartet.

Brian Walker

Maestro is available from Just Games and also by mail order from this magazine (see ad page 21).

ENCHANTED FOREST

DESIGNED BY
ALEX RANDOLPH

PUBLISHED BY
RAVENSBURGER

PRICE £8.99

Despite being first published in 1981 in Germany under the title *Sagaland*, and being voted Game Of The Year in 1982, the English version of this game has only just been released this year, although the rule book in the German version of the game I have is written in five languages, including English.

Although it looks at first like a simple memory game and not much else, you quickly discover that *Enchanted Forest* is a terrific game of bluff and revenge. The components are the typical, high quality Ravensburger fare. The board shows a village to the west, a castle to the east guarded by a river, and a major path running between the two through the centre. To the north and south of the path are two forest areas. Players begin in the village.

There are thirteen plastic trees. Each tree has a piece of cardboard inserted into its bottom picturing one of the magical things hidden in the forest: such as Cinderella's glass slippers, Puss-in-Boots' Seven-league Boots, and The Golden Goose. At the start of the game, the trees

are stood upright, mixed, and then placed randomly on the thirteen specified spaces in the forests. There are also thirteen cards with matching pictures, which are shuffled and placed near the castle. The top card is turned face up and the game begins.

Players roll two dice then take a two part move, first moving the number of spaces on one die and then the number of spaces on the other die. If a player lands on a tree, he can pick it up and secretly look at the picture. If a player lands on another player, he sends him back to the village. If a player rolls doubles, he can do one of three things: move to any tree space, move to the first space across the river on the castle side, or reshuffle the cards and turn over another one.

If a player gets to the castle, he can attempt to identify the tree which matches the symbol on the face-up card. To do so, he picks up the tree he thinks is the right one and looks at it. If it does match, he shows it to the rest of the players, takes the card, replaces the tree, and turns over the next card. If it doesn't match, he replaces the tree without showing it to the other players and puts himself back in the village. A player who guesses correctly can also elect to attempt to identify the tree matching the new face-up card on his next turn, if he remains in the castle.

Obviously it helps to have seen most, if not all, of the trees, especially the one matching the current face-up card. If you are constantly forced to take shots in the dark, chances are you'll spend the whole game going back and forth between the village and the castle. The first player to get three cards wins.

Some memorisation is definitely necessary, but don't let this put you off. It's not that hard to memorise thirteen locations. And it's almost as much fun those times

when you're wrong, at least if you're playing the game in the right spirit. Besides, you'll have no problem whatsoever remembering which players bumped you back to the village when the opportunity arises to repay their kindness.

Play really begins to get nasty after one player has successfully gained two cards. Since there are only three routes to the castle, the main path and one route from each forest area, players tend to congregate near these three critical intersections, attempting to block opponents from getting to the castle.

Bumping an opponent back to the village isn't the only way to annoy your competition, though. It can be just as troublesome to change the face-up card after rolling doubles, especially if it seems like an opponent is headed towards the castle because he knows the location of the right tree. But here is where the bluff comes in. If you've looked at a good number of the trees, it can be to your advantage to begin moving toward the castle, even if you don't know the location of the tree which matches the face-up card. Your opponents may assume you do know, and one of them may elect to change the card after rolling doubles, changing it to a tree you have seen, thereby helping instead of hindering.

The game is for 2–6 players, but I don't recommend playing with more than four. A game with four or less will take 15–30 minutes. With five or six players, the time increases dramatically. The last six player game I was in took over two hours. Everyone had memorised all the trees, but no one could get to the castle!

Enchanted Forest is an example of elegant simplicity. It is a must for a gamer's collection.

Alan R Moon

CITY

**DESIGNED BY
WOLFGANG KRAMER
AND ANDREAS
SPOTTOG**

**PUBLISHED BY
JUMBO**

PRICE £18 (APPROX)

The theme of shopping has not provided the basis for many games, possibly for reasons of potential mundanity, so a special *welkommen* to this new arrival from Holland, albeit from a German designer.

The sight of a die lulls many people into believing that luck must therefore be the deciding factor, but in this, as in many such games from the same stable, it is simply a means of determining movement, and not the deciding factor for success.

The board, which is well made, depicts a small town with shops along the edge of the board and in the centre. These are connected by a series of (mostly) grey, and (a few) red squares.

Onto these squares are placed the 'shoppers', whose wealth varies according to their colour. All the shoppers have big noses and can only move in the direction in which their nose is pointing (seriously), unless at a crossroad whereupon they

may change direction. The one you don't want in your shop is the red piece which represents the shoplifter. After this initial placement there are four rounds where you obtain businesses. This is indicated by placing a coloured counter on the shop of your choice. The red squares/entrances are especially valuable which is why each player is only allowed to have one at the outset. The play sequence then proceeds as follows: 1) roll the die, move a shopper; 2) score points; 3) expand or buy new shops. The first part offers a plethora of choices, sometimes all unfavourable. The newly moved piece always scores on the property on which it finishes irrespective of who owns that property, plus any shoppers residing on a red square will also score, including the thief (minus 2), hence the value of the red spaces. Expansion costs three points for a red business, and two for a normal business. New property costs five points and three points

respectively. The expansions act as a multiplier to your score when a shopper comes calling. The winner is the first player to pass the green space on the scoring track.

City fulfils much of the criteria required for a successful game; the luck element is a long way removed from the roll a die and hope for the best school; the player interaction is strong and there is plenty of opportunity both for planning and decisions of an altogether more vindictive nature. Initial strategy would suggest that it is unwise to take an early lead . . . unless you want half your stock half inched, that is. City is suitable for 2-6 shoppers with an hour or so to spare.

Brian Walker

Available from Just Games.

**TARGUI**

**DESIGNED BY
DIJKSTRA AND VAN DIJK**

**PUBLISHED BY
JUMBO**

PRICE £20

This exquisite looking game was the result of a desert trek by the two above named Dutchmen. After returning to Hol-

land they were determined to make a game based, if not on their experiences, then at least on the environment which enthralled them for months. Considering their lack of experience in game design the result is a small miracle. Of course Risk is the father of nearly all territorial conquest games, yet Targui is no more than a distant and very refined cousin.

SHEIKH CATTLE AND ROLL

The game system contains a number of innovations, the first of which is the board. This is made up by laying tiles, representing varying types of terrain, onto a blank board consisting of indented squares. Thus you have a differing playing area each time. Kings and Things used much the same method

though to different effect. What you have here are oases, salt mines, and good old fashioned sand dunes, all of which have either an economic or strategic value – sometimes both. You pitch your (settlement) tent and camels in any one of eight tiles in your corner of the board. A turn consists of a number of rounds which are determined by a die roll. If a 3 is rolled you would hand in three of your turn order cards. These are shuffled, together with an event card, and then drawn randomly. This simple, but clever, device often makes for considerable excitement as the turn order can be crucial.

SALT MINE STRATEGY

Movement and combat are easy to grasp; move your camels one adjacent area, or

attack one adjacent area and occupy if successful. With combat, you add the strategic value (if any) of the terrain you are attacking from to the die roll. Your opponent divides by two and removes the corresponding number of camels. He then attacks back, using the same method, providing he's still got something left to attack with. The central salt mines are especially strong both strategically and economically. The last part of a round consists of buying camels which may then be placed in any one area you occupy. At the end of a complete turn, players then levy, adding up the economic values of territories which they control and collecting the cash. If you lose your home settlement, you cannot levy, and are effectively done for. The winner is the player who has the biggest levy on the last turn, or, the sole survivor, for as you may have gathered, there are possible eliminations in the game. This is not really a problem as they generally occur at a fairly late stage – unless you get picked on. The event cards can be really devastating, perhaps too much so. For this reason I would recommend keeping a check of the ones that have been used on the list provided. Also recommended is the 12 turn optional game length which would take about two hours to complete. The full 16 turns is too much for the game to handle,

especially if there has been an elimination and you've got a paranoiac wailing away in the background. You know how these people can be.

Rules in English, for 2–4 players. On yer camel.

Brian Walker



DER AUSREISSE

DESIGNER UNKNOWN

PUBLISHED BY
F X SCHMID

PRICE £7.95

Yet another reincarnation; welcome back from the grave *Das Favorit*, now given a new lease of life as 'The Outrider'. The game has always been a popular one both among *aficionados* and normal people in Germany, though the game's origins are French. Wherever it's from its rebirth has been greeted ecstatically. Perhaps as a reaction to this overreaction, I find it difficult to shout its praises from the rooftops, though it is quite fun to play.

The theme of the game is cycling and I defer to no one in my liking of such games

as they offer a potential wealth of tactical possibilities. *Das Favorit*, however, is heavily luck orientated compared to others in the genre, but less so when there are fewer players.

The gist of it is: each player receives six cards. The object is to keep up with the 'yellow jersey' rider (the player who has played the highest card in the round). To do this you must play a card within 2 of the pace he has set, otherwise you lose minutes. If you play a higher card, you take the coveted jersey yourself.

What spoils things are the *gegenwind* cards. These must be played immediately on yourself, and have the effect of deducting two from your current speed. Far better to use our variant (issue #4) whereby you can play it on an opponent with the proviso that he/she has not been the recipient of such a card already that turn. This would then take effect on their next card played.

There are other cards such as 'sprint' and 'incline', but by now you should have got the general drift. The problem is that you seem to have little control over your destiny, all of which makes this a great game for fatalistic cyclists, but what about the

rest of us? Just to show the democratic forces at work within the confines of GI House, an extra star has been added to the rating to take into account those whose views differ.

Brian Walker



Quick Moves

From the enterprising Dutch company Jumbo comes *Rimini*, the game of sunbathing.

Not one of their better offerings unfortunately, though puzzle people might go for it. Nothing wrong with it, nice components, pretty pictures. It's just a bit dull. The aim here is to match tops of sunbathing bodies with bottoms (!) of sunbathing bodies. Our old friend 'pattern recognition'. More Bournemouth than Benidorm. *Rimini* is published by Jumbo and distributed in the UK through Robenau. 2-4 players. Price £8.95. ***

Readers looking for a copy of *Hol's der Geier* (reviewed issue #2), should look no further than *Teacher's Pet*. Unfortunately the game has been inexplicably repackaged by Waddingtons and is now clearly aimed at the childrens market (see page 28). The card quality is also markedly inferior to the Ravensburger version. 2-5 players. Price £3.99. ***

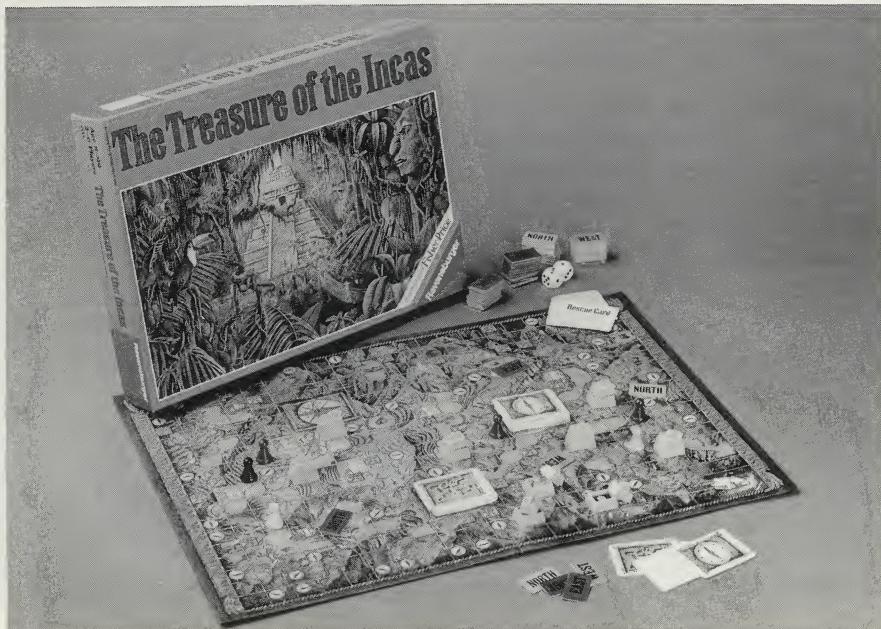
There are some games that you desperately want to like; games that just *look* so good. Into such a category falls *Treasure of the Incas*. But alas, it just kept falling

and didn't stop until it reached the turkey farm. The idea of the game is to locate the treasure buried under one of the temples and then deliver it back to base. A noble task, but unfortunately one that quickly degenerates into a game of tag as players roll the die and hope to land on the space of the treasure carrier, thereby despatching him to a far off island. From the same designer as *Gold Grabber*. It shows. *Treasure of the Incas* is published by Ravensburger. 2-6 players. Price £12.99. *

Another new card game from Waddingtons is *Stun*. Though even simpler than *Teacher's Pet*, this is aimed at an older age group. Players turn over cards in attempt to reach 15 (or more) without collecting a Stun card. If successful they collect a chip. First to obtain five chips wins. 2-4 players. Price £4.99. *

'A working class hero is something to be', sang John Lennon. Such an icon was Andy Capp. But yesterday's icon is tomorrow's anachronism (and aphorism). Unfortunately the game based on his character Willi Wacker (thus named for foreign consumption) appears equally redundant. There's nothing actually *wrong* with it, just that it's rather dull. In some ways the play mechanics resemble that old favourite *Grass*, but whereas that game scored from being associated with the illicit, Herr Wacker has no such appeal, though the play and theme have no readily apparent link. Especially disappointing that this emanates from Hexagames who, in the past few years, have provided us with some of the best card games around. You can't win 'em all though.

2-5 players. Price £7.95. ***



CHARTS

General Games

- ① Pass The Pigs (Milton Bradley)
- ② Family Business (Spielbreaks)
- ③ New York, New York (F X Schmid)
- ④ Scrabble (Spears)
- ⑤ Schoko & Co (Schmidt Spiele)
- ⑥ Pictionary (Kenner Parker Tonka)
- ⑦ Karriere Poker (Hexagames)
- ⑧ Hol's Der Geier (Ravensburger)
- ⑨ Pole Position (Platnik)
- ⑩ Deal Me In (Noraut)

Chart supplied by Just Games.

**WHICH GOVERNMENT
IN THE WORLD ARE
HOLDING 35 MILLION
PEOPLE HOSTAGE?**

**WHICH GOVERNMENT
IN THE WORLD SHOOT
PEOPLE IN THE BACK?**

**WHICH GOVERNMENT
IN THE WORLD HAS THE
WORST HUMAN RIGHTS
RECORD IN THE WORLD?**

**WHICH GOVERNMENT
IN THE WORLD KEEP ALL
THE GOLD AND
DIAMONDS FOR THEIR
OWN KIND?**

**PLAY
OPPRESSION®
THE GAME
AND FIND OUT**

MOTOR RACING GAMES

Out with the turbo, in with the new

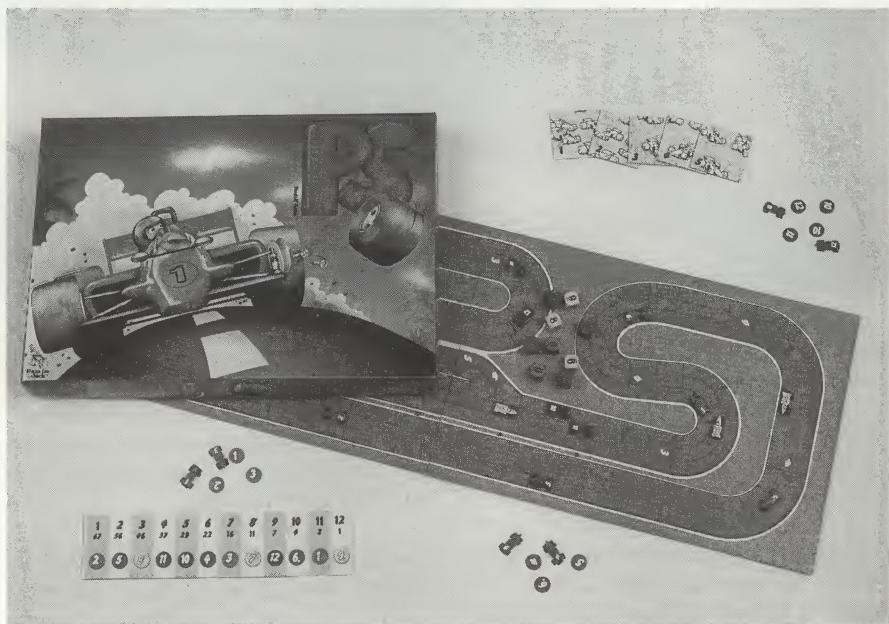
Pete Birks

Games based on motor racing have always been more popular than games based on the fifty kilometre walk, possibly because they're aren't any games based on the fifty kilometre walk. And yet the mechanics could be roughly the same. The reason that motor-racing games are more popular is that there are few of us who haven't harboured thoughts of zooming round Brands Hatch at 200mph, and few of us who have dreamed of walking fifty kilometres in four and a bit hours. Say what you like about playing games for the excellence of the mechanics and abstract satisfaction, at heart, wish-fulfilment is alive and well. I'm sure that the reason I could never come to grips with *Hare And Tortoise* is that the idea of chewing raw carrots and cabbages in order to move my pieces strikes me as vaguely obscene. Doing so in real life would certainly make me move, but not in the sitting room.

Of the five games I have covered based on the racing grid, there are three distinct 'mechanics'. The first group, consisting of *Speed Circuit* (Avalon Hill) and *Formula One* (Waddingtons), tries hardest to be realistic. Cars have maximum speeds, accelerations, decelerations, wear points, limitations on cornering speeds, and, in the case of *Speed Circuit*, slipstreaming. I shall return to this group later.

The second group, consisting of *PS* (Hans im Glück) and *Grand Prix* (Ravensburger), adopt a different method of movement. Each player has three cars, and can move the cars varying distances. In *Grand Prix*, this is always four, five or six, but you have to move one car four spaces, one car five spaces, and one car six spaces.

In *PS* the three movements are decided by the roll of three dice. Since this makes planning ahead impossible, *PS* is really



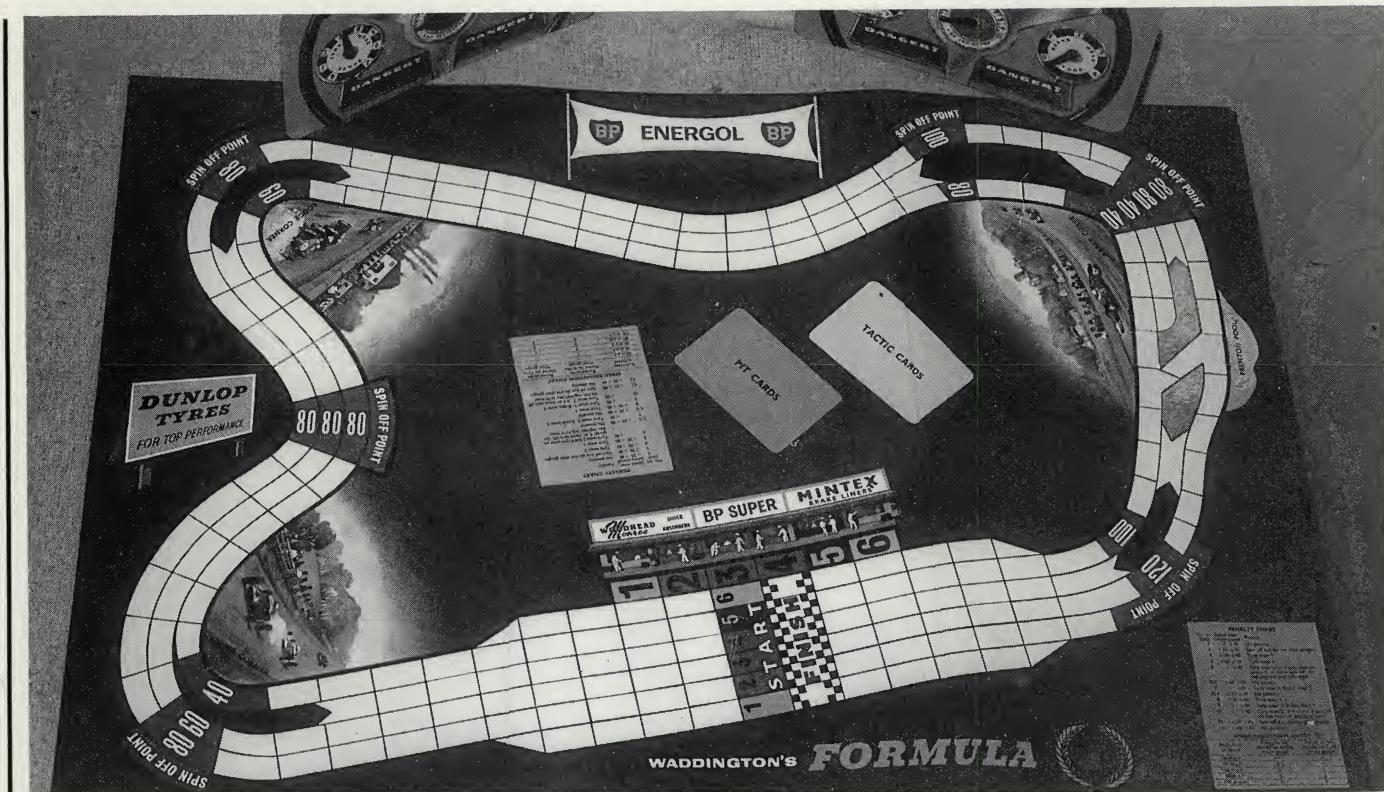
quite a dog of a game, consisting of lots of dice rolls, lots of thinking, and lots of sitting around staring at the ceiling while other people consider their moves. I'm afraid that I can't consider reviewing *PS* much further. There may be a great game hidden away in the hardware, in which case you can follow the principles of the South London Mafia (as our games-playing group seems to be called) and simply change the rules. If you are a games fanatic, you certainly have options. There are lots of bits, although mostly made of cardboard, out of which a good motor racing game could be constructed. But if you are the kind of person who wants to open up that pretty cellofoil and get straight down to it, well, *PS* is not for you.

BOUNCING FOUR-WHEELERS

Grand Prix is much neater. Apart from the consistency of car movement, it also uses the technique made famous in *Six Day Race* (the cycling game, reviewed in GI #1) of 'bouncing', although here it is called slipstreaming. If you land your car on a specified space behind another car,

then you get a bonus of three spaces. This means that a block of cars will tend to move faster than a single car way out in front (or way behind). Since with six players there are eighteen cars, crashes are frequent. There are two 'hard shoulders' to which casual crashers are dispatched. On the inside, you can carry on using the car as normal, while on the outside, the car moves at a steady three spaces. Cars can re-enter the main track only on certain spaces (four apart on the outside, further apart on the inner) and, if they crash into the back of a car while on either hard shoulder, then that car is out of the race. This need not be a complete disaster. With two cars you still have the choice of four, five and six spaces, and so your 'third' car (that is, the dead one) can be treated as the car with which you aren't trying anyway.

Which brings us to tactics. There are three obvious choices. The first is to try to keep your three cars in a block, guaranteeing frequent slipstreaming. The second is to try this with two cars, using the third as the occasional blocker and carnage causer. The third is only to try with one



car, using two cars as blockers and mayhem merchants. An optional rule is to have a 'designated car', which is the only car allowed to score points. This makes the one car option compulsory.

SUICIDE PACK

Assuming the 'designated car' rule is not applied, there is no 'right' option. If a couple of players try the one car option, then it is worthwhile to try it as well, using the bounces from these cars which will occasionally appear. If no-one seems keen to send one car off on a spurt, then it is suicide to try it alone. Similarly, if one other player tries the trick, it is worthwhile to let him go away. With no slipstreaming available as a lonely front-runner, he'll be hard-pushed to stay in front. The two-car option appeals, but I like the idea of a combination of two and three-car options. So long as you can keep all three cars 'up with the pack' (that is, in the top ten, which in **Grand Prix**'s ridiculous scoring system is what counts), you can maintain your options until fairly late, when you can make a two-car burst.

Grand Prix offers little in the way of realism in its mechanics, and yet paradoxically simulates motor racing better than the 'realistic' ideas behind **Formula One** and **Speed Circuit**. Cars spread out quickly; someone often crashes on the first bend, not through any fault of his own but because of someone else's bloody-mindedness (hello, Ayrton Senna). The only lack of realism, that being in front on your own confers some-

thing of a disadvantage, is forgivable because it makes for a more exciting game. Its major weaknesses, as with so many games, is a lack of clarity in the rules, and a hopeless scoring system. It would be nice, for example, if the rules defined how the game was won.

The third group consists of just one game, **Formel Eins**, and as that was well covered in issue #5 of this magazine, we'll move on to **Formula One** and **Speed Circuit**, which I have left until last because these are almost certainly the most widely played of the games I have mentioned. **Formula One** is 'the daddy of them all' and, in terms of its lack of relative sophistication, it shows. It has one advantage over **Speed Circuit** – the element of luck – you can always blame a defeat on unlucky dice rolls – and one serious disadvantage, the order of movement. In **Formula One**, car one moves first each turn, and car six last. Now, I admit that this offers numerous opportunities for wrecking other players' chances, but as a movement system it is like something out of the Ark. Another irritating factor is that the game's good point – judging whether or not to make a pit-stop, means that a 'proper' race needs to be at least three laps, which takes about an hour and a half. If your car is wrecked on the first lap, this can make for a boring time. The most enjoyable game I have played was a ten-lap marathon with three players taking two cars each. Sure, one of your cars gets mashed, but the length of the game eliminated the luck of the die-roll. Finally, the random distribution of tactic cards always results in that perpe-

tually infuriating character – the lucky player – getting two superb driving cards and neverending lucky dice-rolls.

OFF FOR A SPIN

Both **Formula One** and **Speed Circuit** have numbers on corners. These are speed restrictions, although the effect of exceeding these speed restrictions is different in each game. In **Formula One**, you can keep to safety speeds without penalty. You can also, as a result of so doing, come last. Without entering the technicalities of the mathematics, it is generally best to enter a corner at 20mph more than the maximum. Two exceptions are when going at either safety speed or 40mph over the safety speed lands you exactly on the corner. This self-same principle applies to **Speed Circuit**. If you can land on a corner, do it. On very rare occasions, you may choose to spin off deliberately, usually to get you into a corner you could not reach otherwise, and which, when you crawl off again at 60mph (a space in **Formula One** and **Speed Circuit** represents 20mph) allows you to block a threatening opponent. In **Formula One** you start the game with brake-wear and tyre-wear (in **Speed Circuit** these are amalgamated into the single concept, 'wear'). Entering a corner at 40mph over safety speed entails 8 chances in 9 of some kind of penalty, 4 chances in 9 of a heavy penalty, and one in nine of spinning off. At 20mph over the safety, you have 5 chances in 9 of no penalty at all, no chance of a heavy penalty, and one chance in nine (again) of spinning off. No surprise, therefore, that

20mph over safety is a popular option. Of course, as the game progresses and, like me, you throw small penalty after small penalty, you have to choose between dropping back to safety speeds, or going for the dreaded pit stop . . . in which sense, the game was ahead of its time. Pit stops in **Formula One** are two things, often necessary, and occasionally nasty. You have to pick up a 'Pit Stop card' – miss a turn, fail to repair your car, that kind of thing. In a three-lap race this makes an attempt at going through without a pit stop a bog-standard. In a ten-lap race, you have to stop, and the technique is to time it right. If you stop too soon, you waste time, and if you leave it too late, some nasty character might block you from entering the pits, leaving you to limp round for another lap, forced to stick to safety speeds, only to find that when you get round again, someone else is blocking you . . .

As in **Speed Circuit**, it is best in **Formula One** to get in front, and try to stay there. As such there is a distinct advantage for cars 1, 2, and 3. Players of the other three cars have been known to use their tactics cards on the first corner simply to gain a lead, but I think this is wrong. If you are

stuck, just make sure you are not balked, and use your cards when they are really needed, that is, when they will get you onto a corner when any other option is too risky.

OUT WITH THE ROLLS

Speed Circuit is generally accepted in the games world as the most skilful of the motor racing games available. In the second edition (Avalon Hill bought the rights to the game from 3M) dice rolls are introduced. Ignore this abortion. The other thing to throw away are the pre-designed car cards. You might as well deal out six cards and award the game to the person who gets the Ace. The cognoscenti play on the original 3M board and with the original cars, made of pleasant lead-packed metal rather than

non-biodegradable plastic. The only improvement introduced by Avalon Hill was the requirement to designate an attempt at slipstreaming when writing your orders. This can cause the occasional glorious crash.

The game is a development on **Formula One** but with four subtle changes it became the equivalent of Chess to Draughts. The first was the elimination of the dice roll. Exceeding the safety limit causes one wear for 20mph over the designated safety speed, and two wear for 40mph over. The second was the option to design your own car. The third was that, instead of a fixed movement system, the car in front moves first. If cars are level, the car ordered to go faster moves first, and if all else is equal, the car on the inside moves first.

PLAY BY MAIL

The big helmet

John Harrington

Although having more to do with the stockmarket than Silverstone, **The Big Helmet** is a must for Formula One fanatics. Here's how it works:

Each week players buy and sell shares in Formula One drivers. The starting prices of the drivers will be variable according to how many World Championship points they have already acquired together with their ability and car quality.

To give you an idea of starting prices, here are the ones we used after the first race in Brazil:

Prost – 1480p
Senna – 1400p
Mansell – 1440p
Berger – 1330p
Boutsen – 960p
Herbert – 1250p
Capelli – 960p
Warwick – 1090p

Unless there are over thirty players participating it is advisable to only use the drivers listed above. If there are more, then add Gugelmin.

BUYING AND SELLING

Players start with 200 shares in each driver. On each turn (1 per week), players may sell up to 100 shares in each and

every driver, and, with the money generated plus cash forwarded from previous turns, may purchase as many shares in other drivers as they can afford. Transactions should be executed in denominations of ten and no player should be allowed to go into debt.

PRICING

For every 10 shares sold in a driver, the price drops 1p. for every 10 shares bought the price rises 1p.

VICTORY POINTS

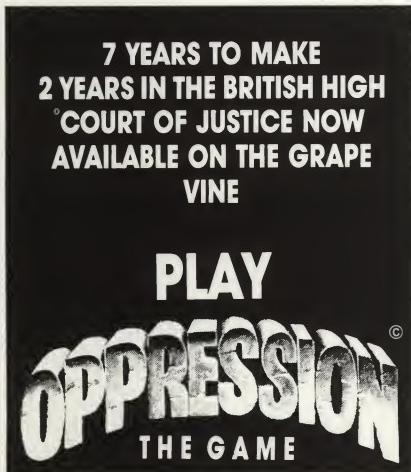
Victory points are calculated as follows: Number of shares x the drivers world championship points. Note, a driver's world championship points are taken from his best 11 out of 16 Grand Prix races. Each driver should start with 1 world championship point in case anybody does a 'René Arnoux' and fails to score in any of the sixteen races.

WINNING

The player with the most victory points wins the game. Cash counts for nothing.

THE WAD OF HONOUR

To add a little spice, it is recommended that each participant contributes a meaningful sum into the pot at the start of the game. Prize money to be split according to preference.



The reduction in chance means that in a game of competent players one can plan many moves ahead, and the speed of play increases accordingly. The fourth, and perhaps the most important, was the introduction of arrows on corners. These represent the optimal racing line, and following an arrow allows you to go 20mph faster than the corner theoretically allows, with no wear penalty. An entire article could be written on the optimal use of these arrows (particularly on the nasty second and third bends on the Monaco track) but, put simply, use them when you can. Always look at least one turn ahead, and try to dominate the play. If you can get the inside line at a vital point in the game, the use of two wear points may be worthwhile.

That the game provides three tracks (based on Monza, Monaco, and Watkins Glen) is an added bonus (*new courses, in the form of expansion kits, are available for virtually every track on the current Grand Prix circuit – Ed*)

Assuming that you are not using the die-roll option, and that you are designing your own car (my own choices for these designs are listed elsewhere), it becomes clear that the way to win is to use 'what you've got' as efficiently as possible. In the cases of acceleration, deceleration and start speed it would be rather difficult not to do so, but with top speed and wear, a little more thought is needed.

With a high top speed, make every effort to ensure that no-one else can use it. In other words, get in front, and stay there. If someone gets behind you on a long straight and slipstreams you when you are going 180mph (the top speed), then they gain two spaces, on which the result may well depend. Similarly, if you have a low top speed, stay alongside a small pack of players, and pray that you can steal a slipstream or two. Games are won and lost on the 'spaces for nothing' principle.

WEAR AND TEAR

Tactical problems also apply with wear, although it doesn't matter if you have a lot or a little. Over three laps, taking an extra wear instead of, say, an extra 20mph start speed, means you must gain three spaces from those three extra wear. Obviously, therefore, if you only gain three spaces, you have merely broken even. The cardinal rule with wear, therefore, is to try and gain two spaces for the use of one wear. If you manage to do it with every wear you use, you will win.

In what situations can two spaces be gained? An obvious case is the 'long

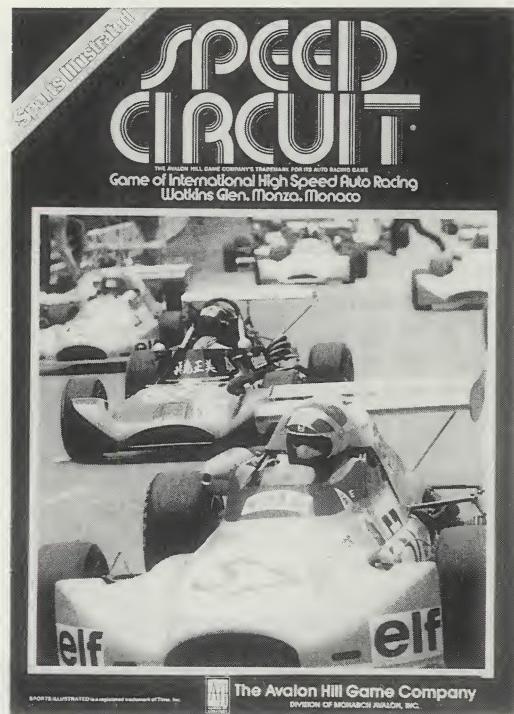
bend' on the Monaco track. Since only one wear is used for each bend, if you land on the bend at 20mph over the limit, and come out of it at 20mph over the limit next turn, you only use one wear, but gain two spaces over not having used a wear at all. If you used two wear on the same bend, you only gain three spaces, a smaller percentage profit.

A second clear-cut case comes about as a result of advice given earlier. Suppose going 120mph leaves you one short of a 120mph corner, while going 140mph leaves you on that corner. If you have a top speed of 160mph, you gain three squares by using a wear and hitting that 120mph corner at 140mph.

Often, things are not so simple. In certain cases it is not so much a matter of the squares which you gain, as of the squares which you can cost another player. If a move gains you nothing, but costs your main opponent four squares (by causing him to crash, or brake strongly) then you still have 'gained' four squares, but only in relation to one other car. Then you have to ask yourself questions. How is that player performing in terms of Grand Prix points? Is he a threat? Was he trying to chat up my wife at that party three weeks ago? That kind of thing.

The astute use of wear, slipstreaming and top speed is the secret behind successful **Speed Circuit** play. With only three complicated variables (since competent play in the other areas requires little talent) one would think that the game would be easy. Certainly, in the games I have played with six players, the result has often come down to a single space, and my opponent and I have looked at each other and wondered where the hell 'that space' came from. This is what makes the game so great. A single error (often one down to guesswork when another player has a choice of speeds and you have to guess which one he will choose) can lose a player a game.

So, how does one win at **Speed Circuit**? Well, as a Liberal might say, it all depends. A typical game consists of three one-lap races, using the same self-designed car for each track. In this case, getting a fast start is vital, and so an 80mph start (which will get you to the front of the grid) is automatic. But in a game of three two-lap races, a fast start is less important than a reasonable wear allocation. However, getting stuck at the back of the grid can still make weaving



your way through a mite messy, so a 60mph start is probably best. In three-lap races (if you have an entire evening to waste), start-speed is unlikely to matter, and so 40mph start speed would be the best choice.

The permutations on the number of players and the number of laps and the number of tracks is enormous, and the 'best' car changes for all of them. But, for the two-lap grand prix, covering all three tracks, with six players, the general consensus is as follows. Start Speed – 60, Acceleration – 60, Deceleration – 20, Top Speed – 160, Wear – 5 (per lap).

On a one-lap version, it would be: 80, 60, 20, 160, 4.

On a three-lap version: 40, 60, 20, 160, 6.

At Monza (any number of laps): 40, 60, 20, 180, 5.

At Monaco or Watkins Glen (one lap): 80, 60, 20, 160, 5 (Watkins Glen)
80, 60, 20, 140, 6 (Monaco).

Two laps:
60, 60, 20, 160, 5 (Watkins Glen)
60, 60, 20, 140, 6 (Monaco)

Three Laps:
40, 60, 20, 160, 6 (Watkins Glen)
60, 60, 20, 160, 5 (Monaco)

TOO MANY PLAYERS

Rules are not sacrosanct. I have seen twelve player games of **Speed Circuit**

and **Formula One**, and with a little manoeuvring I'm sure they could work at **Formel Eins** and **Grand Prix**. Obviously, a certain amount of skill is taken out of the game, but they work fine, especially after a few beers. (Not too many beers though, pitch invasions of grand prix tracks can be dangerous.)

THE CAMPAIGN GAME

We are trying this this summer with **Grand Prix**, using the correct scoring system for motor racing, which is impractical in a single **Grand Prix** game, but seems to work well in a campaign. Of course, there needs to be a group of you who meet fairly regularly, and you need to decide what to do if a player fails to turn up (engine troubles?)

ROLE-PLAYING

It would be quite possible to assign 'player/car characteristics' to cars, attempting to reproduce the cars which are in this season's Formula One Series. Prost, for example, could receive a free 'single space' per lap in **Speed Circuit**, while Senna would get a 33% risk treble space, only to be used on designated corners. (Yes, I know this involves dice, I'm sorry). McLaren-Honda could get two spaces per lap advantage compared to any Cosworth engine. And so on.

GI

VARIANT

The personal touch

Alan R Moon

This Speed Circuit variant first

appeared in Avalon Hill's All

Star Replay, and offers players

the opportunity to decide how

they are going to drive the car in

addition to designing it.

Roll two dice when consulting any of the following tables:

Chance Table

Roll	Result
2-7	OK
8-9	Spinout
10-12	Crash

Test Brakes Table

Roll	Result
2-9	OK
10-12*	Use one wear or spinout. All future wear costs now doubled.

* If this is the second time you have received this result, you crash.

Increase Top Speed/Acceleration Table

Roll	Result
2-9	OK
10-12	Reduce top speed and acceleration by 20mph immediately and alter this turn's speed if necessary.

Increase Start Speed

Roll	Result
2-3	Start speed increased 40mph
4-8	Start speed increased 20mph
9-12*	Stall. Miss one turn.

* If you stall three turns in a row, you are out of the race.

The ramifications of this system will be obvious to the experienced player. The daring driver will take a negative die roll modifier and take more chances on the corners by consulting the Chance Table instead of using wear.

The conservative driver will take a positive die roll modifier and more wear and then try to preserve some wear so he never has to consult the Chance Table. The variations are, of course, almost endless.

What kind of driver are you?

THE GAMES

Formula One

Waddingtons, 1961. Out of print but not too difficult to find.

Grand Prix

Ravensburger, 1974. Out of print but not too difficult to find.

Speed Circuit

Avalon Hill, 1972. Generally available, price £14.95.

Niki Lauder's Formel Eins

ASS, 1982. Out of print and hard to find. See last issue's R.I.P.

PS

Hans im Glück, 1988. Available from this magazine by mail order: price £15 + £3 P&P.

Die roll modifier:	+2	0	-1	-2
Preparation points:	-1	0	1	2
Wear	2	3	4	5
Prep points	-2	-1	0	1
Wear	6	7	8	
Prep points	2	3	4	
Top speed	140	160	180/200	
Prep points	0	1	2	
Start speed			40	80
Preparation points			0	1
Acceleration	20	40	60	
Preparation points	0	1	2	
Deceleration	20	40	60	
Preparation points	0	1	2	

GI

Holiday '89

Brian Walker

*Yes folks, it's that time of year.
Time to pack up your troubles in
your old kit bag and travel,
travel, travel. No reason though,
why your holiday shopping
should be restricted to purchases
of bullfight posters and
afterburn lotion. Why not add a
few games to your collection?*

Most retailers will provide a mail order service so you don't have to worry about valuable duty free space being taken up. Without further ado, then, we proudly

present our collection of games international and racial stereotypes.

AUSTRALIA

G'day. Welcome to the land down under. The land of chunder. Just like a pom to come in our winter when it's likely to be pissing down on Bondai. This is the time to round up yer mates, down a few tubes, and rip open a few boxes. One game we're especially proud of is **Squatter**, which is all about our favourite animal – the sheep. There's hundreds of the little blighters in this game, which we reckon is the first sheep shearing simulation. Published by Murfett, if you're interested. For all you diplomatic wooftahs we got **Warlords** from Panther Games, a multi-player job about the commies trying to reunify China and bang all the sheilahs. Good luck to 'em, I say. I reckons this company must have a thing about the yellow peril, 'cause another of their games is **Shanghai Trader** in which players control brothels, opium rings, and all sorts of crim activities. Jeez! This sort of thing makes me sick. Have these weird

does no morals? Gimme a Chips Raffety film anyday.

BELGIUM

Like Australia, this country is not known for an abundance of cerebral activity. Brussels, though, is the home of one of Europe's most enterprising games companies: Flying Turtle. Their best known game is **Shark**, which is definitely worth getting if you don't already have it. Chicago is also worth a look, and of their new range **Kalahen** looks the most promising. While you're at it, have a litre or two of **Trappist**, or **Duvel**. Just don't attempt to play a game afterwards.

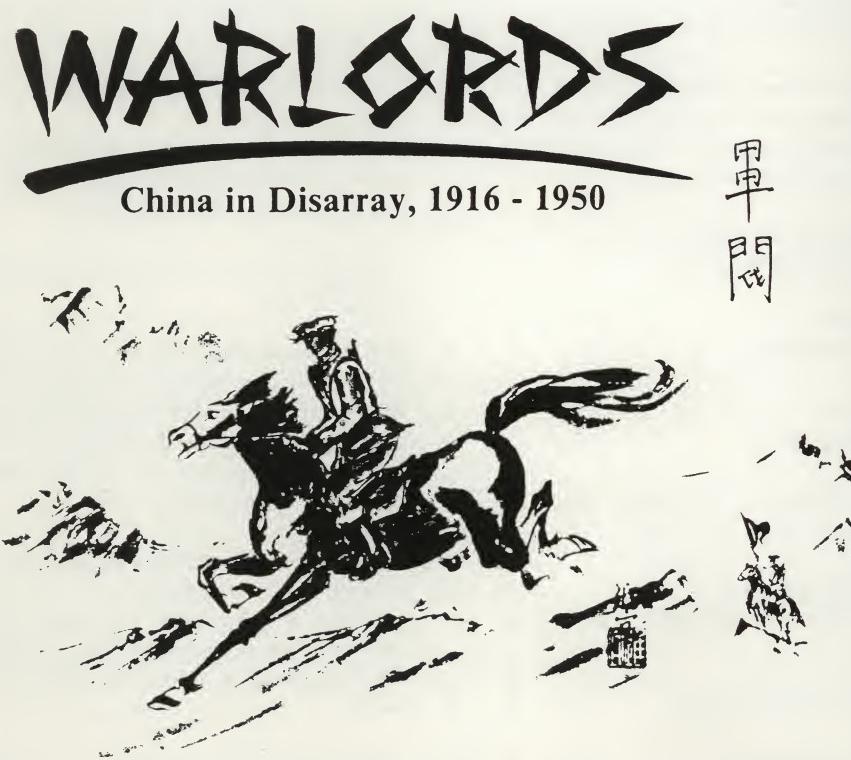
THE NETHERLANDS

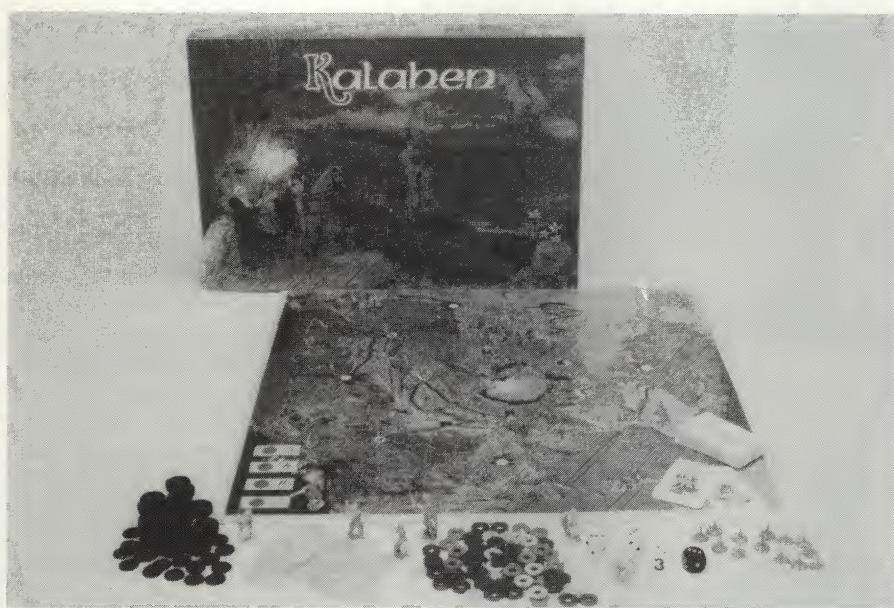
Games playing is looked upon as more of a children's activity in Holland, unless it's chess, or one of the 'classic' games. Nevertheless there are pockets of resistance, the most notable being the Chess Café on the Korte Leidsedwartstraat in Amsterdam. As the name suggests, chess is the main form of activity though you will also find games of **Acquire**, and **Railway Rivals**. The cafe has a charm all of its own, as the denizens drink, gamble, play, and smoke strange smelling cigarettes through to the small hours. Amsterdam is also the home of Jumbo Games whose products make intermittent appearances in this country. Their most notable release is undoubtedly **Targui** which is reviewed in depth elsewhere in this issue. Jumbo's latest release (also reviewed this issue) is **City**, a game of strategic shopping from the prolific Wolfgang Kramer. Simpler than **Targui**, this is also a recommended buy. The real pearl though, if you can find it, is **Homas Tour**. This classic cycling game went out of print several years ago and at one time was selling for a few pounds as a reduced item. Now it is valued at around £50, so if you see it, grab a few.

Unfortunately, good games shops are thin on the ground though Compendium in Amsterdam is better than most.

FRANCE

The problem with most French games is that they're in French. *Pardon, monsieur?* And what could be more French





than Love Trivia, which is currently top of the pops? Food Trivia, *peut être*. Since Trivial Pursuit finally became intellectually *chic* (like the Beatles, it took five years), Q & A games have become all the rage, with subject matter ranging from the cinema, to the Kremlin (*Soviet System*). Still, there are some games worth changing your travellers cheques for. The most notable is Ambition, which is in fact Schoko & Co. Same production, same company, yet it costs twice as much as its German counterpart. *Pourquoi?* According to the manager of the French games shop Jeux des Cartes, the answer is to be found in the French nature: 'The French are suspicious of anything cheap,' he tells me. Something one could never accuse the English of, I think to myself. 'If it (Ambition) were to sell say, for FF100 (£10), nobody would buy it.'

Those of you nostalgic for the revolutionary fervour of the sixties will be interested in Mai '68, a game that has been around for sometime now but recently reappeared in a spectacular new edition by Rexton. Unfortunately you're likely to end up throwing the 'paving stones' at each other, rather than the hated CRS, as the makers forgot to code the pieces for the initial set-up, and while this gives it an added use as a jigsaw puzzle, the net result is likely to be frustration. Worth a look though, simply for the quality of the artwork. The same company has also acquired the rights to the products of the defunct International Team of Italy, and promised to revise the rules. One of the most unusual games of all time must be Supergang which comes complete with a revolver. Part of the game involved using this to fire a projectile at a (non-human) target as an adjunct to on-board movement. Their latest release is Full Metal Planet, and the components live up to the

Kubrick pun of the title. In a more general vein, the horse racing game Triple Couronne got rave reviews, but rumour has it that the game is going to be published next year by Jumbo in Holland, which will mean English rules, so wait a while and save yourself a massive translation. The '89 range of French games looks disappointing, though Globetrotter from Schmidt France looks to have possibilities.

Role-playing is increasing in popularity in France and most English/American modules have been translated. In the other direction, Gaston is a game just waiting for a licence. The subject matter is Clint Eastwood's pet peeve: punks. Not of the cyber variety, but plain old fashioned leather jacketed types. For fantasy freaks there's Rêve de Dragon, during which you gain experience points for making love. *Mon dieu!* In Paris, Jeux des Cartes on the Rue des Écoles (5th) boasts an excellent selection of games, as does GAMES in the Forum des Halles (1er arrondissement).

Mai: '68: the forces of law and order contemplate a change of outfit.

SPAIN

Like most Mediterranean countries, life is geared towards the great outdoors. The number of Spanish games could probably be counted on one hand. The last year has seen the release of a couple of election games, one bearing an English title – *The Political Game* – but everything else in Spanish! Unfortunately the game was deemed a dog after a mere five minutes. More promising is the cycling game *La Juego di Vuelta Cyclista*, currently undergoing translation. And while this is by no means another *6-Tage Rennen*, it is nicely made. More on this soon. Did I say one hand? Make that three fingers. However, it's always worth checking out the games section at the *El Cortes Ingles* department stores. And if you're in Barcelona, why not say *Hola* to Jaime at *Jocs and Games*?

ITALY

Something of a mystery this, as I've been unable to find an excuse to take an expense account holiday there, as yet. However, the demise of International Team must have decimated the home grown market. Experience has proved though, that when the Italians get down to it, they can do it as well as anyone. Remember *Al Parlamento*? While on the same theme, *Referendum* looks full of





interest but a translation is needed. Any offers?

USA

Despite the vast number of American games imported into this country there are several that don't make the crossing. Among the newer crop, MB have a few offerings worth looking into. **Trump - The Game** (as opposed to the film, or the building) is based on the megalomaniac of the same name and is reputed to be excellent (it will be reviewed in these pages shortly), as is **Liars Dice**, which my colleague Derek Carver confirms. Unfortunately sales have been poor so it will be going to collector's heaven very shortly. Another line from MB which sold poorly was their 'Big Deal' series. This is altogether more understandable as two out of the three were dreadful. The third is **Zillionaire**, which bears a strong resemblance to the German **Karriere**

Poker but is nowhere near as much fun though it does have a better scoring system. Quite why it doesn't work as well is something of a mystery. I suspect it's something to do with reducing the number of cards (and thus the number of players) and the very poor quality of the cards themselves.

Sports fans would do well to check out **Pursue the Pennant**; a baseball game that has already sold over 50 000 copies despite a \$50 price tag. Still on the diamond we find Parker Bros' **Starting Lineup Talking Baseball** designed by our very own American Desk. This is a statistical game and comes with a computer designed as a baseball stadium with a console at either end. The teams come in cartridges together with cards listing individual averages. The *coup de grâce* though has to be the incredibly realistic voice which calls out both the play and the result. It's a two player game though

there is an excellent solitaire option. Expect to shell out about a hundred bucks, but it's worth it.

SCANDINAVIA

Little is known about what goes on in the fjords at night though I suspect games playing is not high on the list of priorities, especially if the home grown games are anything to go by. Norway was responsible for the **Mega** role playing system, about which incredible, and unprintable, stories abound. Sweden checks in with **Drakborgen**, which was licensed by Games Workshop and renamed **Dungeonequest**. From the same designer (Dan Glimne) comes **Willi Wacker**, better known in the UK as **Andy Capp**. This is an excellent card game revolving around the adventures of the cloth cap hero and has recently been published by Hexagames in Germany. Unfortunately, because of copyright problems, the game is unlikely to appear in the UK for the time being so grab it if you see it. English rules are available. **Railway Rivals** fans may like to note that there is a boxed version of the game entitled **Rail** available in Sweden.

GERMANY

The home of games, so take a trailer should the Rhineland be on your list of holiday haunts. Shopping is a real pleasure as most games shops are spacious affairs and usually have one copy of each game open for inspection. Unfortunately there's not in a lot in this year's range worthy of inspecting. Hexagames, though, have some interesting offerings and have English rules for all their games (if not included, just drop them a line). Look out for **Dino**, the first dinosaur strategy game, and **Weltentbummler**, which is in fact **Worldbeater**, the old Intellect game published in the seventies. Hexagames have a policy of reviving classic games and giving them the treatment. Apart from the aforementioned, **Crude** reappeared as **McMulti** (reviewed issue #1), **Monad** came back as **First Million**, while **Showbiz**, designed by my colleague Derek Carver, was released as, er, **Showbiz**. Their card games too are well worth seeking out; **Black Monday** (from Sid Sackson) and **Karriere Poker** were both reviewed in issue #3 and are recommended. Of this year's crop we've been hearing good things about **Schickeria**, and **Choice**, a dice game again from Sid Sackson.

Many of these games are available from Just Games in London, subject to availability. Unfortunately, because of the reluctance of Mattel UK to import, it is

virtually impossible to obtain any of the games from their German cousin in this country. More's the pity because they have several excellent products, all with English rules available. **Greyhounds** was originally made by the small Munich based company Hans im Gluck before being bought up by Mattel. This is a betting game with a great movement system, flawed only by the unrealistic odds. If I tell you that the bookie always loses money, you'll get some idea of just how unrealistic these odds are. To some extent these have been corrected by Alan R Moon, who, in a new set of rules, provided four different ways to play the game. Also from Mattel comes **Suppenkasper**, designed by Karl Heinz Schmiel who was also responsible for **Die Macher**. This, though, is at the opposite end of the complexity scale, being a fun game about weight watching. Of this year's range **Café International** proved to be disappointing as did **Angeschmiert**. The jury is still out on the remainder. Schmidt Spiele's **Schoko & Co** was described by Alan Moon as 'one of the best business games ever'. Indeed, it is hard to disagree. Winner of the 1987 *Spiel des Jahres* award was **Auf Achse**, a trucking game set on a stylised map of Europe. Reaction to this has been mixed; without



doubt the game has its detractors, but I am not one. A fine game. Great trucks too. Ravensburger's back catalogue would put Argos to shame, such is their history. As there seems to be some confusion about exactly what is in print and out, it might be worth clarifying the situation here. **Alaska, Jockey, and Metropolis** will not be reprinted after existing stock is sold. The evergreen card game

Kuhhandel is still going strong, as is the classic stock market game **Börsenspiel** (Broker), but **Playboss** and **Grand Prix** have both bitten the dust, though they are fairly easy to obtain on the collectors' market or through shops specialising in second hand games. Ravensburger's output from the last two years has been rather disappointing but look out for **Ausbrecher**, a fun dice game.

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Brian Walker

One of the biggest problems of Dallas has always been persuading people to play it, but I just lurve it.

This was one of Yaquinto's 'album games' with the 'board' consisting of the gatefold sleeve opened out. To top it off, the cover was adorned with pictures of the appalling Ewing family. Underneath this hideous façade, though, lies one of the best backstabbing, wheeling and dealing games this side of **Diplomacy**. Coincidentally, this is also a seven player game.

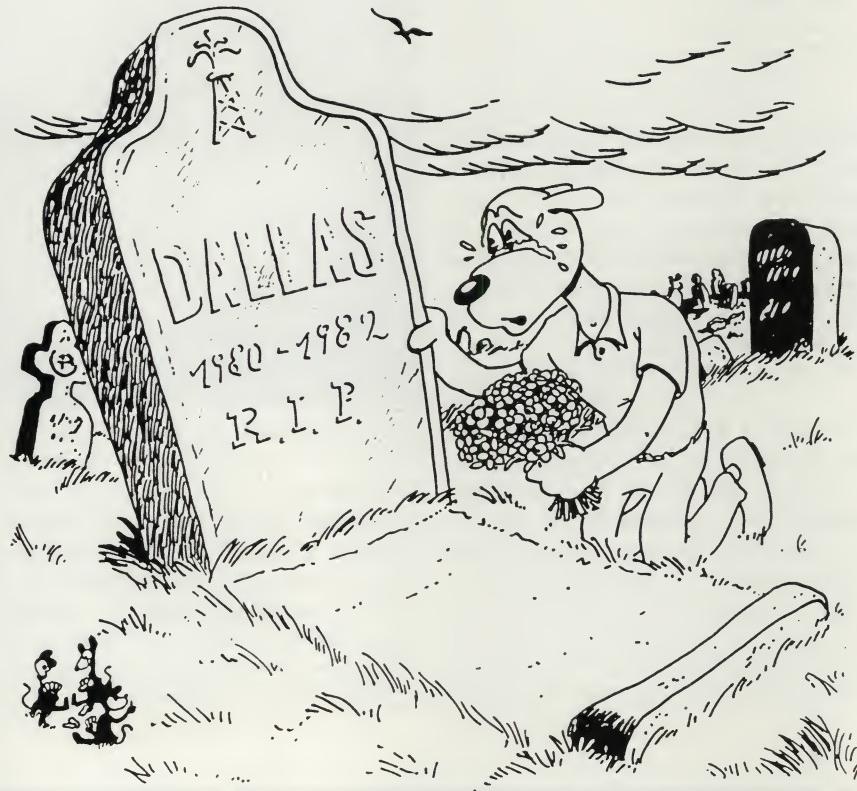
Designed by Yaquinto supremo Steve Peek and first published in 1980, **Dallas** quickly became caught between two stools; too sophisticated for the TV audience, and too tacky-looking for the hobby market. The German company, Schmidt Spiele, licensed the game a few years later and upgraded the component quality. Sales improved, but nobody gave up their day job.

The idea of the game, to quote from the rule book, is 'to obtain wealth and power by accumulating money, stock, and proxy votes. These assets, along with negotiations, coercion and blackmail, are used to manipulate other players at the stockholders' meetings in order to be President of the Ewing empire'. Mmmm, could be that was another reason why people were so reluctant to participate.

I LOVE LUCY

The 'board' depicts the city of Dallas with spaces representing various aspects of the game. Each player chooses a character disc to move throughout the game (your chance to play Lucy the dwarf!). After receiving a hand of cards and a pile of cash, players start to move around the board.

The cards are multi-functional; you may use them to move, vote, blackmail, or as an event when you land on a particular space after moving your character disc.



STOCK'S WHAT COUNTS

If you land on a pink influence space you may keep your card and use the proxy vote portion at the next stockholders' meeting, otherwise cards are discarded after use. The stockholders' meetings are the crucial part of the game and the timing of them is cleverly handled by the game system; a line of inverted counters is placed on the turn record track on numbers five to 10. After all players have completed the initial turn, the first counter on number five is flipped over to see if it is the one marked 'stockholders meeting'. If it isn't, then on the second turn the counter on number six will be flipped. This process continues up to the fifth turn (number 10 on the track) or until the counter is discovered, whereupon there is a frantic scramble to get back to the ranch within the three turns available and avoid the Southfork shaft.

At the meeting you may discover such vital information as 'Bobby has the same blood type as Karen's first child'. Yes, it's blackmail time! If you have a set of three blackmail cards you can order the player against whom they are directed to cast all his votes for you. Prior to this, though, there is a secret negotiation segment in

which anything goes. Players may swap cards, buy cards, lobby for votes, offer bribes for votes, and promise a share of the President's Fee should they be elected. But remember, this is the Southfork Simulation Game: promises do not have to be kept. Just watch your back when they aren't, though, for there are five meetings in all. In between times players cruise around Dallas buying stock and attempting to divert opponents from the crucial meetings. The winner is the player with the most cash after five meetings. Simple to play, but requiring considerable negotiation skills (how do you convince someone that you've just shafted three times in a row that you *definitely* won't do it again?). **Dallas** is a classic of its kind, so next time you get an invite to play this strange looking game, instead of turning your nose up, strap on your stetson and get ready to get mean. Now you take care, y'all. ☐

Although out of print, Dallas is not hard to find, especially the superior German edition. After trying your local Oxfam shop, you could do worse than dropping Yaquinto a line at; PO Box 24767, Dallas, TX 75224, USA. Be sure to send an international reply coupon.

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CONVENTION REPORTS

Babbacon '89

Brian Walker

The quaint Devon resort of Babbacombe played host to the third annual Baycon convention through the weekend of April 14 to 16. The Sefton Hotel, where the convention was held, is more used to accommodating coach parties of pensioners at this time of year, to whom a shandy is considered somewhat *risqué*. Little surprise, then, to learn that the hotel bar went through their first stock of supplies just a few hours after the gaming hordes descended upon them. Far from being unhappy about this state of affairs they elected to keep the bar open as long as dice were being rolled and there were thirsty throats afoot.

The two main events were a **Britannia** tournament and a **Victor Ludorum** competition. The latter takes into account all games played over the weekend and then points are awarded using a method as arcane as it is secret. The main factors appear to be complexity and game length, and of course, winning helps. In addition to the main prize, the **Britannia** tournament sensibly gives prizes for the best result for each faction, though in this case that was somewhat irrelevant as scouser Gordon Sweeney swept the board, so to speak, winning three out of the four factions as well as the tournament itself. The **Victor Ludorum** was won by Tom Walker, thus upholding the family name (to see how the GI crew fared, turn to page 28). Apart from the trophies, prizes in the form of games were provided by this very magazine.

NEW WORLD

One of the most interesting events of the weekend was the appearance of Derek Carver's **New World**, and indeed the presence of Derek himself. Saturday afternoon saw the public debut of the game using Derek's superb prototype. After a four hour session **New World** was voted a hit by all concerned and most of the participants asked (unsuccessfully) if they could purchase a similar prototype. Patience chaps, for the boys in Baltimore (Avalon Hill) have already bought the rights and expect to have a commercial



Above left: **Britannia** champion Gordon Sweeney.



Above right: trainspotter Iain Bowen (left) receives the **Railway Rivals** trophy from the game's inventor David Watts.

version ready for the summer. What would we do without them? Derek also had the original version of his **Showbiz** game, which will be published by Avalon Hill later this year. A sadly underrated game perhaps due to its strong abstract roots, though all this should change when the dressed up American version is released. Another designer in attendance was professional non-smoker David Watts, best known for **Railway Rivals** ('only two needed for the Spanish map') though he had a host of other games with him, all of which were the subject of mini tournaments. For both David and Derek the convention provided an opportunity to gain valuable feedback from their potential market, as well as offering considerable enjoyment.

BRITANNIA DOESN'T RULE

According to the organisers 68 different games were played over the weekend, the majority of which lasted no more than two hours: a sign of the way this part of the hobby has changed over the past couple of years. **Britannia** unsurprisingly was the most played game, closely followed by **6-Tage Rennen**, and **Family Business**.

Several games of **1830** were espied but no **Civilisation**. Again this would have been unthinkable a few years ago. German games proved very popular with **6-Tage Rennen** claiming the title of 'most played game' while the election

game **Die Macher** found several new candidates, all of whom voted it a hit.

Apart from **Britannia** there were few English games in evidence though **First Past the Post** from Waddingtons proved very popular.

QUE?

The hotel, while being very comfortable and spacious and offering superb views of the bay, had a distinctly Fawlty-ish air to it, with service ranging from the sublime (in the bar) to the ridiculous (in the restaurant). Nor did my colleague John Harrington think much of the leaking roof as it dripped on his original **Diplomacy** set, which was also signed by the designer. 'We'll replace it', promised the worried looking manager who turned pale when advised of the game's value. Despite these reservations everyone seemed to agree that it was a great venue and the chances are it will be held again there next year. All of the newcomers I spoke to were surprised by both the friendliness and the openness of the participants, and their willingness to try virtually any game.

Attendance was around 150, well up on last year, so much so that the hotel was full, resulting in many attendees being booked into the adjoining hotel. Even if you've never got any further than a game of **Monopoly**, this is one event you shouldn't miss.

Gamesfair '89



Above: Holy Grail! Wotan Games supremo Julian Musgrave ponders the Meaning of Life.

James Wallis

Gamesfair is Britain's biggest residential rolegaming convention, held annually at Reading University and organised by TSR. It has a pleasantly relaxed atmosphere, with the emphasis firmly on game-playing rather than buying, selling and hyping new products. This year was no exception, with the convention taking place on the week-end of April 7-9.

TSR had taken around 500 bookings, most of them months in advance (Gamesfair always sells out very quickly) and by 12.30pm on Friday the Students' Union building, where the action took place, was packed with gamers all looking for something to do. TSR usually provide some seminars or quizzes, but this year there seemed to be a distinct lack of organised events, leaving the onus on the gamers to organise themselves. The Small Furry Creatures Press were running their regular *En Garde!* campaign throughout the week-end, having recently published their own edition of the rules to this classic game (reviewed in GI #1), which seemed to attract the usual horde of fans, and elsewhere Pterra Games were running two new 'Postal' games, *Sector Five* and *Rumble!*

There was a strong presence from new magazine *Reviewer*, who had organised tournaments for *Battletech*, *Car Wars* (won, in a burst of synchronicity, by one

Andy Wheeler) and *Renegade Legion*, as well as holding a prize draw which raised well over £300 for Save The Children and would undoubtedly have raised more if some bastard hadn't stolen half the prizes.

AD&D COMPETITIONS

TSR, as usual, ran their AD&D Team Competition and AD&D Open Competition, the latter being the more serious of the two. It was won by Andy Faulkner, who will be sent by TSR to Gencon this summer to compete in a similar tournament there. From what I could gather, a large British contingent will also be crossing the Atlantic to cheer him on. Both competitions were still using the first edition AD&D rules, although copies of the second edition (or AAD&D as it has already been dubbed) were selling quickly upstairs on the TSR stand. Also available were the latest supplements for the various TSR rolegames, the latest TSR novels and a couple of new boardgames, including *Sniper! Bughunter* and *Red Storm Rising*. Nearby, the Virgin Games stall did a brisk trade in games of all sorts.

Only three games were noticeably being playtested. Julian Musgrave, supremo of Wotan Games and editor of some magazine or other was on hand to show off the prototype for *Excalibur*, the second game in the King Arthur series, which will be released in six languages simulta-

neously at the end of May. Some of the finished designs for the game were on show, and looked fabulous: if the gameplay matches the components, it will be a very impressive package. The other boardgame under test was *Sluggery*, a battle between rival insects (I kid you not!) designed by a group of London gamers, and which looked entertaining to say the least.

Also under test for future release was *Zidovra*, a fantasy city campaign setting and rolegaming system, to be produced by Twintake. This large package uses a novel rules system in that players do not know their characters' exact abilities; they only have descriptions such as 'above-average strength' or 'very wise'. The religious system and magical skills are based on historical research, and the city itself has a very Machiavellian feel to it.

Visiting celebrities were few. Wayne, the lucky mascot of *GM* magazine, put in an appearance and seemed bewildered by the number of people playing rolegames without wandering around in costume waving rubber swords at each other; and even more bewildered by a group of people playing *Dark Cults* and using him as the central figure!

DUNGEON DECLINE?

In the main hall among the events organised by the convention-goers themselves, there seemed to be a large number of people playing GURPS, a game which has previously kept a low profile at Gamesfair, and the old favourite *Paranoia* was enjoying something of a renaissance. Normally the most visible game is AD&D, but the number of dungeon masters looking for AD&D players seemed to have shrunk this year. Other games were also in evidence, with sessions of a number of classics such as *Civilisation* continuing all night.

Gamesfair can be fun even if you don't rolegame: boardgames and socialising play a large part in its appeal. With beer at Students' Union prices and the company of 500 gamers for a week-end, who can complain? G

DESERT ISLAND GAMES

A tropical rôle

*This issue, literary terrorist
James Wallis finds himself
thousands of miles from home,
on our idyllic island with only a
select collection of games to
stave off madness.*

When I was asked for my 'desert island games', three things occurred to me. Firstly, that I was incredibly honoured to be asked and this probably meant I was getting a pay cut or something. Secondly, I wondered if the *Games International Tax-Haven Desert Island* contained the gamers' equivalent of the Complete Shakespeare and Bible that Sue Lawley gives to visitors to her Radio 4 desert island – chess, a pack of cards, a number of polyhedral dice and so forth. And thirdly, desert islands tend to be – well, deserted. I mean, if Man Friday turned up we could manage a game of *Squad Leader*, but if I felt like a game of *Diplomacy* I'd need the rest of next week as well.

Having said that, I have roughly five minutes to choose which games to take before this ship sinks, so I'll head for quality rather than solo playability. First into the lifeboat goes a copy of *Dark Cults* – no, two copies because I've always wanted to develop an expansion set for it. *Dark Cults* is an excellent narrative card game, telling a Lovecraftian story of a hapless character on a midnight stroll. It's simultaneously strategic and great fun, and lends itself well to slightly silly plotlines, most of which begin 'Such-and-such a gaming personality left the old rumour-ridden brick tenement house that evening . . .' And it has the all-important solo variant!

What next? I'll need something in the futuristic unit-vs-unit combat range, and *Car Wars* (Steve Jackson Games) has always been one of my favourites. It's fast and furious, and doesn't sacrifice realism for playability – if cars with shields, spike droppers and turret lasers can be called

'realistic'. Even if the game itself gets dull, you can always see who can design the ultimate death machine on wheels for under \$7500.

If *Car Wars* is going in – the deluxe edition if possible – then the logical choice for a role-playing system is *GURPS*, also from Steve Jackson Games, because it includes a worldbook set in the dark future of *Car Wars*, giving the excellent combat game some role-playing possibilities. *GURPS* itself is very flexible, and I love tinkering with its mechanics. The range of available worldbooks and sourcebooks is huge and continually growing, and while they've had a couple of dodos, the majority are excellent.

Oops! The lifeboat's getting pretty low in the water. That's not helped by the addition of *Tales Of The Arabian Knights*, from West End Games. Like *Dark Cults*, it combines aspects of role-playing with traditional gaming techniques – in this case, a boardgame. As with all the best games, nobody gets eliminated before the end and, in the words of Yogi Berra, 'It ain't over until it's over'. Lots of fun, loads of components.

Diplomacy is a game which I simultaneously love and hate. It's a classic, the archetypal strategic continent-wide war-game, almost abstract in its simplicity, and I am atrociously bad at it. This doesn't stop it being one of my favourites, and the island would give me plenty of time to brush up my 'Stomp all over Italy' manoeuvres. Also, being a student of English Literature, a copy of *Scrabble* is going to be a necessity to keep my vocabulary exercised. Unfortunately the

two-volume *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* that I need to check dodgy words is going to weigh down the lifeboat even more . . .

Nuclear War and its expansion **Nuclear Escalation** have been my favourite beer and pretzels games for several years, except I don't drink beer and dislike pretzels. The game is simple enough to be understood even while blind drunk, and any fool can understand the victory conditions: the winner is the last one with any population cards left. It has a couple of elegant mechanics but this doesn't get in the way of the essential fun of deciding which of your friends should get nuked first. This is the ultimate 'bad taste' game, and very good with it.

I think the boat will hold a few more items . . . a copy of the *Ghostbusters* rolegame; very simple, great fun and an ideal introduction to rolegaming; it should fit in nicely. A copy of the *Empire of The Petal Throne* books: horrible mechanics but an in-depth background like no other; a true classic. Can I squeeze in *Railway Rivals*? No? Yes? It'll fit in somewhere – I didn't need that First Aid kit anyway. And finally a copy of *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*: a gross, tacky, unpleasant game with the sole redeeming feature that if any other gamers get washed up with me, they'll know how to play it and we can get straight into a game.

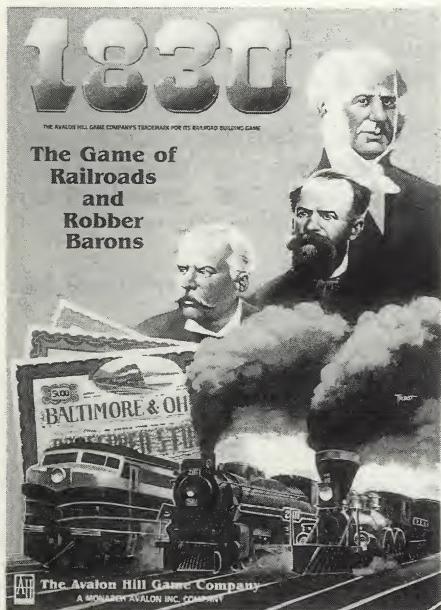
That seems to be it. Paradise here I come! What's that you say? Dr. Moreau? Oh, I'm sure I can interest him in a game of *GURPS Mad Scientists* . . .

Next issue: Derek Carver



VARIANT

The Coalfields



by Alan R Moon

This variant will open up the board quite a bit. While the new hexes are added to the south map edge, the north is also increased in value by making it easier to run into and through New York. This balances the value of all the corporations and

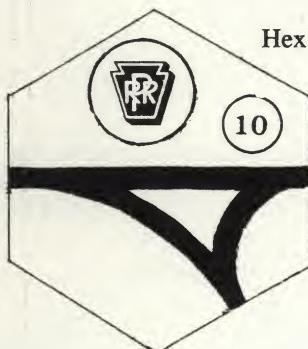
puts the emphasis back on the player to run the corporation in the best possible manner. In addition, all the corporations, with the exception of the *Erie*, now begin in the east, and must make their way west together.

- ① Add two more rows of hexes to the southern map edge as shown on the next page. The Deep South hex on the map board becomes the new *C&O* base hex in hex K13.
- ② Treat the old *C&O* base as a normal grey city hex.
- ③ The *Norfolk & Western* is added as the ninth railroad.
 - a It is available at the beginning of the game.
 - b Its base hex is Norfolk.
 - c There are nine shares; a 20% President's Certificate and eight single share certificates.
 - d The *N&W* has three tokens.

- ④ The *Pennsylvania*'s base hex is changed to a different, permanent grey hex. All routes may be traced through this hex, the *Pennsylvania* base station does not prevent a route being traced through this hex. Any corporation may begin or end their route by counting the *Pennsyl-*

vania station as in the normal rules of play, but only the *Pennsylvania* itself can count the base station as an intermediary stop on a run. The station is considered to be anywhere within the hex, and this can change within a turn from player to player or from turn to turn as needed.

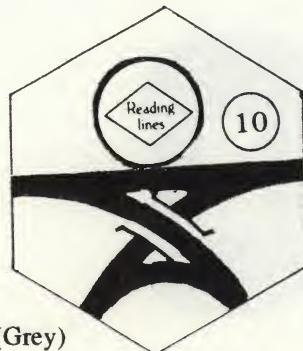
- ⑤ New hexes and tiles.
 - a Baltimore and Boston have the same, new green hex.
 - b Baltimore and Boston have different, new brown hexes.
 - c New York has a different brown hex.
 - d Grey hex D24 is changed.
 - e Hex F20 is changed from a double small city hex to a single large city hex.
 - f There is a special brown tile for hex G17. When the Brown tiles become available, the yellow tile in hex G17 (no matter which one was placed) can be promoted to this brown tile. All routes run through this hex must count it as one city, value \$20.
 - g Hex K3 is a new large single city hex.
 - h Hex K15 is changed to a river hex which costs the corporation that initially lays a tile \$40.
 - i Hexes K11, L6 and L8 are mountain hexes. Each costs \$120.
 - j Hex L9 is a mountain hex with a



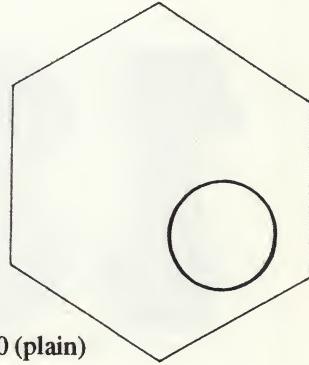
Hex H12, Pennsylvania Base (Grey)



Chicago



Hex H14, Reading Base (Grey)



Hex F20 (plain)

single large city. It costs \$120 to build tile 57.

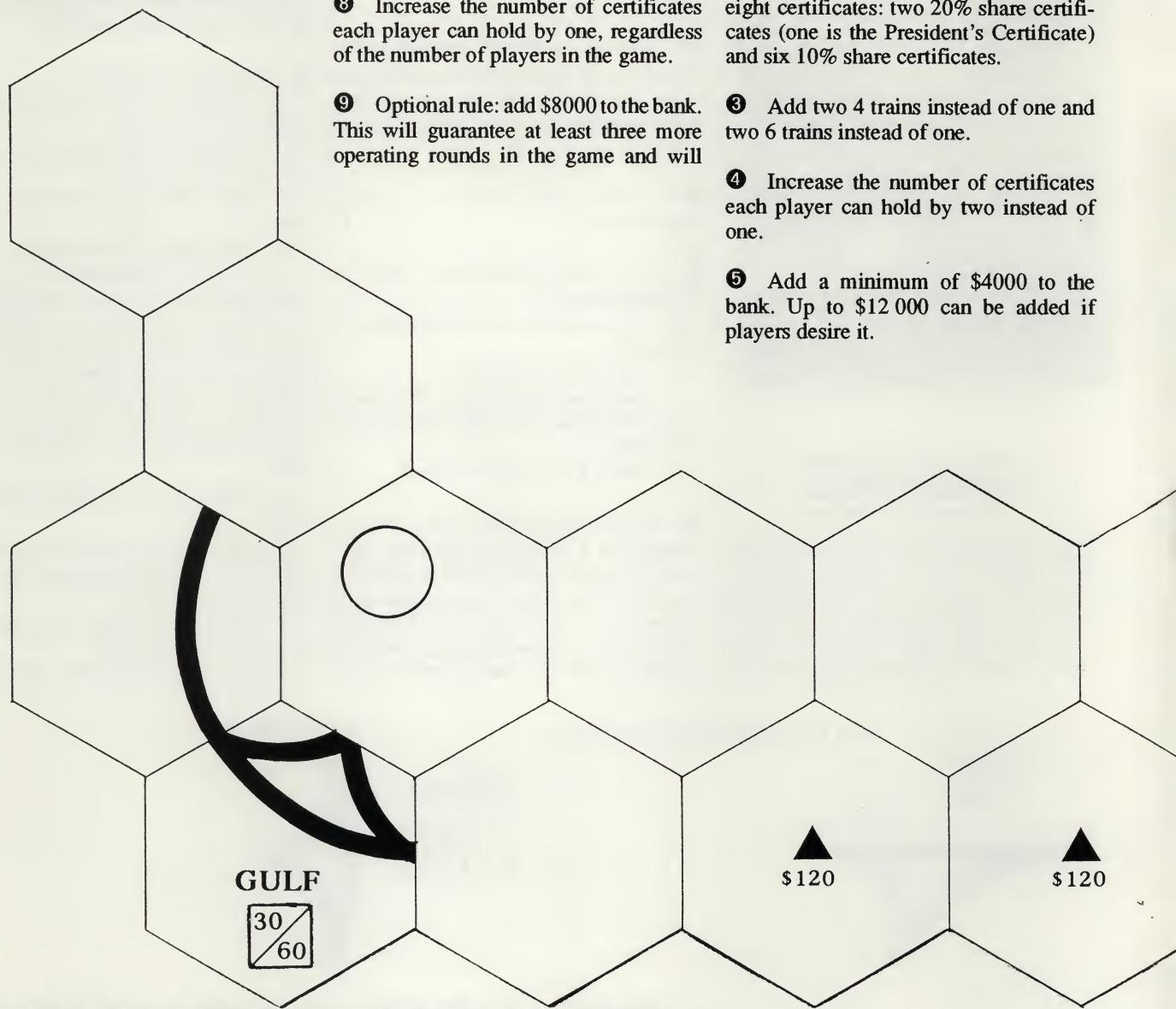
k The Chicago hex is changed. Routes may now be run through this hex. It does count as a city on the route.

l Hex M10 is the Coalfields. Each corporation which wishes to run into/through this hex must pay the \$140 blasting cost to build the route to the mines. It does count as a city on the route, and any route can only pass through it once per run.

m Hex N13 is the new Deep South.

⑥ Train changes.

- a Add one more 4 train.



1830

- b Use the optional 6 train.

c Add two 7 trains (4-6-6-4 Challengers). They cost \$710. These become available after the first 6 train is bought.

d Diesels now cost \$750 with a trade-in and \$900 without.

e Trains that become obsolete are not removed until after the owning corporation's next Operating Turn.

⑦ Tile Mix.

- a Add two yellow 57 station tiles.
- b Add one green 14 station tile.
- c Add one green 15 station tile.
- d Add one brown 63 station tile.

⑧ Increase the number of certificates each player can hold by one, regardless of the number of players in the game.

⑨ Optional rule: add \$8000 to the bank. This will guarantee at least three more operating rounds in the game and will

make the decisions of whether to buy a diesel or 7 train more important.

Take a ride

This variant can also be used with the 'Take A Ride On The Reading' variant published in the *General*, Volume 23, Number 6, to create 10 railroads, as follows.

① The *Reading* station is located and treated per the rules in 'Take A Ride On The Reading'.

② The *Norfolk & Western* now has only eight certificates: two 20% share certificates (one is the President's Certificate) and six 10% share certificates.

③ Add two 4 trains instead of one and two 6 trains instead of one.

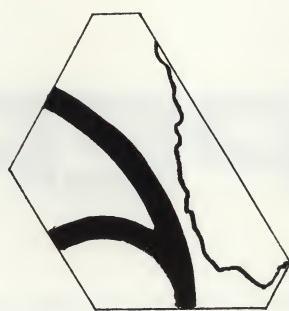
④ Increase the number of certificates each player can hold by two instead of one.

⑤ Add a minimum of \$4000 to the bank. Up to \$12 000 can be added if players desire it.

- ⑥ All other rules in the first part of this article supersede those in 'Take A Trip On The Reading'.

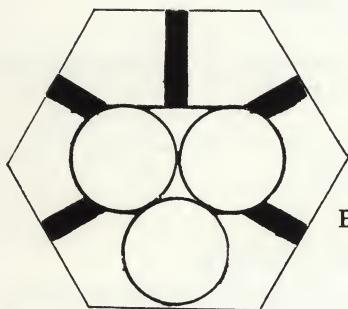
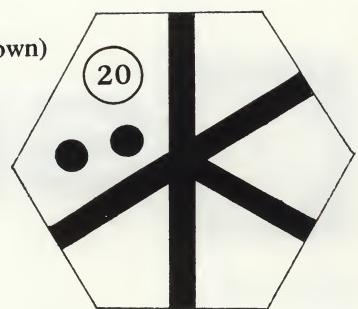
Another interesting variant would be to use both the *Reading* and *Norfolk & Western* and drop the *Erie* from the game. [6]

1830 is published by the Avalon Hill Game Company, price £18.60.

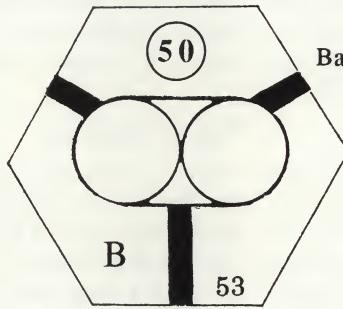


Hex D24 (Grey)

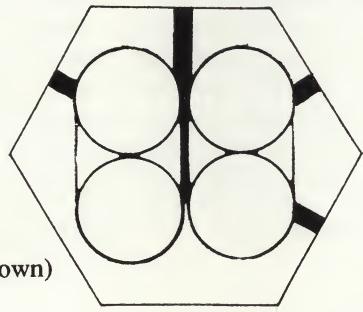
Hex G17 (Brown)



Baltimore (Brown)

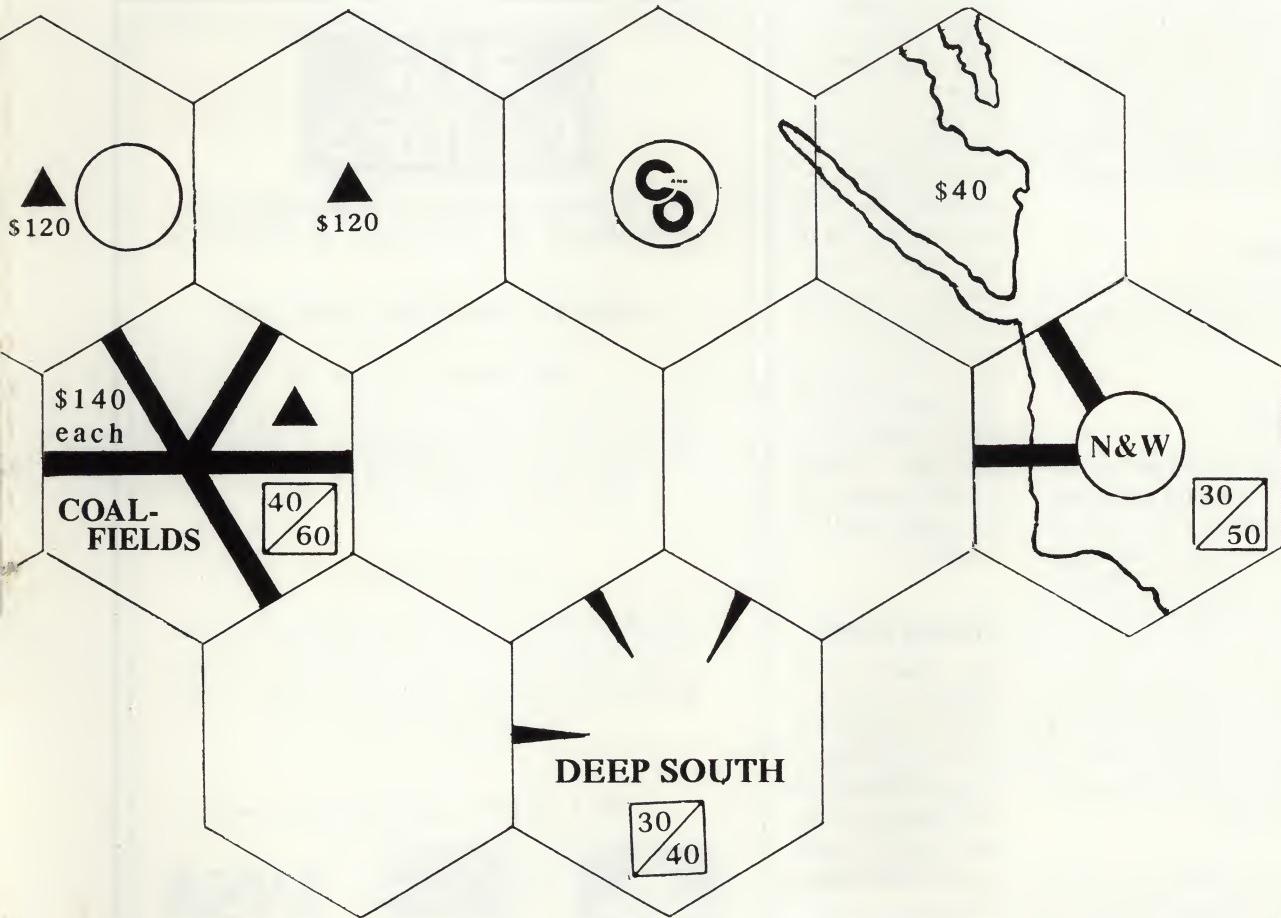
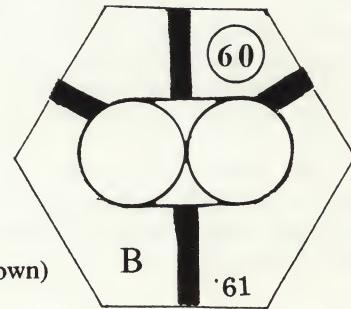


Baltimore/Boston Tile (Green)



New York (Brown)

Boston Tile (Brown)





SNIPER

Critical cred

Thank God that the credibility of our reviewers does not rest upon their ability to play games well. Otherwise, we'd all be in trouble following the results of the *Victor Ludorum* tournament held at Babbacon recently.

Leading from the front was our esteemed editor who finished sixth, though this no doubt has something to do with his tendency to explain rules in German and then threaten to go into his 'mad dog' mode should opponents fail to concur with his wishes. We have to go all the way down to 41 to find the next GI stalwart; crawl forward, John Harrington. Checking in at number 50 was Philip 'PAM' Murphy, who fully lived up to his girlie sobriquet, while proving that designing games does not mean you necessary win them was Derek Carver at 51.

The worst is yet to come though: 77 it's 'Sumo' Siggins. In his defence, Sumo claims that he won 'several games' but 'didn't bother' to fill in the score sheet. Whose fault's that, Sumo? The name of Mark Green, manager of London's Just Games, was nowhere to be seen. But then the list only included the first hundred.

Value for nothing

Spotted recently in a review in *GM* magazine: 'Value for money; 7/10. Price; as yet unknown.'

Teacher's what?

One of the best selling releases in Germany last year was the card game *Hol's Der Geier*, published by Ravensburger and reviewed in issue #2 of this magazine. Imagine our surprise therefore, when the very same game pops up on the Waddingtons label under the name *Teacher's Pet*. All above board, of course, but now the game is clearly aimed at the childrens market, as pictures of the kiddies adorn the cards. The teutonic version had a fairly neutral theme so that it could be enjoyed by all.

Lay optimally, the game is a clever combination of psychology and memory. So why the change? Come in Waddingtons: 'The game can be played on two

levels' they told me. But why aim the game specifically at children when it was such a best seller among adults in Germany? 'A marketing decision', came the reply. Ah, so now we know.

Top of the pole

The latest body queueing up to bestow an honour on this magazine is the Polish censorship board. A Polish games magazine entitled *Razem* recently prepared an article on foreign games magazines. To illustrate the piece a full colour picture of the cover of our issue #2, featuring *Kremlin*, was emblazoned across the page. As is the way in such places, the article had to be submitted to the censorship board, whereupon it was immediately rejected. Or, to quote our man in the Iron Curtain, 'rejected by censorship'.

It seems the bureaucrats had problems with the picture of Gorby being situated immediately above two large missiles. Even more sacrilegious was the word 'Games' appearing in big letters at the top of the same page. Surely yet another attempt by the decadent dogs in the West to trivialise our great leader, they must have thought. What would they make of the game itself, I wonder?

Stickler rules?

The answer to our *Enigma* competition last month was a *coconut palm tree*. Congratulations to Tony Ellam of London SW18, who was the first reader to respond correctly, and wins a copy of the game.

The question for this month's competition comes from *Origins*, published by Jordans Games:

Why is someone particular about obeying rules a 'stickler'?

First correct entry received wins a copy of the game.

Stomach churning

Readers amused by marketing man Garry F White's amazing attack on Alan R Moon in our last issue may be interested to know that his missive arrived with a covering letter which questioned whether we had the 'intestinal fortitude' to publish his tirade. No problem, Garry. The only risk to our innards was that we almost died laughing.

GI

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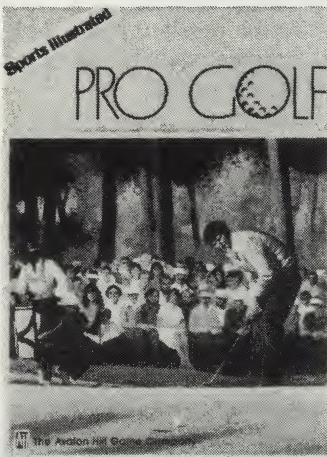
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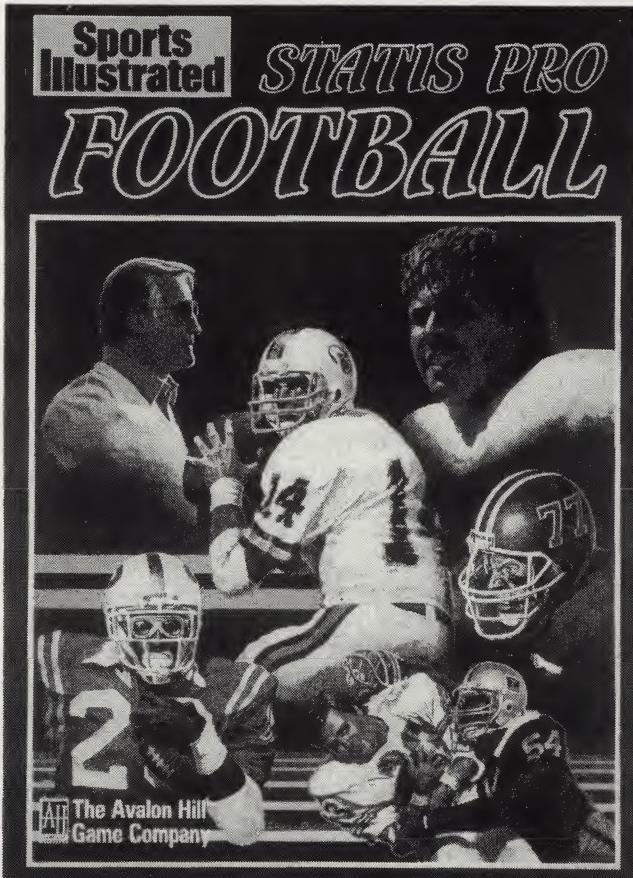
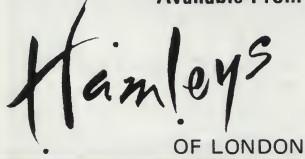


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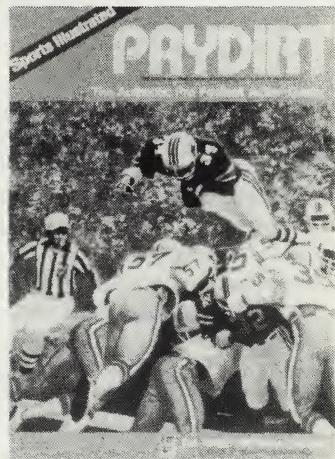
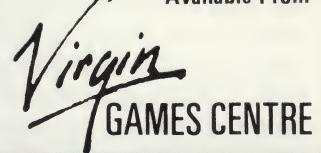
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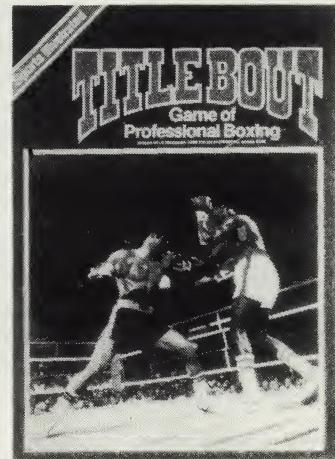
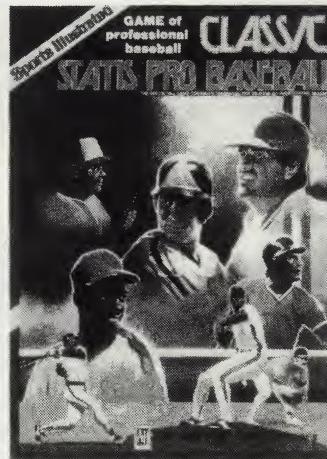
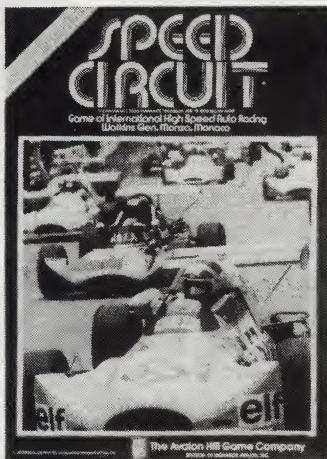
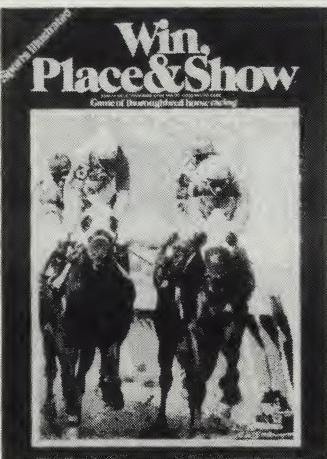
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Eighteen fifty-three

Steaming out of Hemel Hempstead and into your local game shop very soon will be Francis Tresham's long awaited 1853, the final part in the trilogy of railway games produced by Hartland Trefoil. For a fuller description, over to Francis himself; 'Hartland Trefoil are bringing out a new railway game called 1853. Like 1830 this game uses basic design features of 1829 in a new setting; in this case, India. India is probably ideal for a game of this kind, its merits including vast distances, widely distributed population centres, and a very interesting range of natural obstacles. This results in a game in which railway skills are much more important than financial ones.'

'Several features of this game are entirely specific to it. Most importantly they are all in keeping with the subject. The most dramatic change is an almost incidental clause in one of the rules that makes gigantic continent straddling routes far more remunerative than tight little networks in a highly populated corner, and some people who are familiar with previous games in the series might like to speculate on how this has been done. It was, of course, intentional that 1829 should make portray the territorial battles of the early British railways, and that 1830 should make possible some really villainous financial tactics. Hartland have now completed the trio with a game for railway builders.'

The last Orgy

Commissario, the makers of Orgy, have gone bust. MD Julie Prior blamed the AIDS epidemic as one of the reasons for the game's demise. 'Buyers simply didn't want to know, even though we had a huge advertising campaign,' she told us.

Mastermind

The classic code breaking game Mastermind has been republished by Waddingtons in two different sizes; a standard edition, and a special mini travel version. Retail prices are £3.99 and £1.99 respectively.

Intercash

Details have arrived of the second Inter-game tournament to be held at the Essen Games Fair in October. Following the success of last year's event, the number of teams competing this year is to be doubled from eight to sixteen. The organisers have contacted us in an effort to find four British teams (the GI crew have

NEWS

already registered, and we already have an additional team). Any volunteers to make up the other two teams of four should contact us. As an incentive there will be a cash payment of approximately £35 to each member of a foreign team. The structure of the tournament is as follows: each team member plays four games against different opponents. Points are awarded according to position, scores tallied, and the winners awarded a trophy as well as a few free games. The games selected so far for the competition are Ave Caesar (reviewed issue #6), Pole Position (reviewed issue #5), and Der Ausreisser (reviewed this issue). The fourth choice is still under discussion but candidates include First Past The Post (reviewed issue #5), and Regatta (the Avalon Hill game recently re-released in Germany). Interested parties wanting more information should write to Peter Gehrman, D-4690 Herne 1, Bochumerstr 81, West Germany.

Incredible bulk

Coming soon from Games Workshop is Space Hulk, which crosses The Awful Green Things From Outer Space with the Alien movies. Packaged in one of their huge boxes, the game looks good value for money at £19.99. Contents include 30 plastic miniatures, five dice, forty-nine full colour heavy card stock corridor and room sections, plus all the other bits and pieces necessary to waste an alien. Full review next issue.

ManorFam

A final reminder that Manorcon will be taking place at Birmingham University next month, July 7 to 10. The main event is the Universities Diplomacy championship, though there will be several ad hoc tournaments based on a wide variety of games, from Acquire to Speed Circuit. Civilisation designer Francis Tresham will also be there running competitions and demonstrating his prototypes. Outdoor games include a session of American Football and a croquet tournament(!). This is more a 'hobby' event than the recent Babbacon, though newcomers are always welcome. Reasonably priced accommodation is available at the halls of residence, though a word of warning

about the food: take your own. The slop served up by the University canteen would be rejected by any self respecting dog.

The price of peace

TM Games, the importer of Avalon Hill, Victory Games, FASA, and Columbia games, have cut the prices on nearly all these ranges. Some examples of the cuts; Civilisation has been reduced from £25.95 to £22.35. Battletech drops from £16.95 to £14.95. The reasons cited for the change are favourable exchange rates between the dollar and the pound, and also to reduce the possibility of a price war between certain retailers. All of this is good news for the punter.

New York news

The American Games Fair will now take place in September, 8 to 10, and will be staged at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York city. According to the blurb, there will be several role-playing and adventure gaming tournaments, with lots of prizes up for grabs. Additionally there will be awards for the best game in a variety of categories. More news as it happens.



REVIEWS

ABSTRACT GAMES

TRIUMPHDESIGNED BY
KEITH WOODWARDPUBLISHED BY
CREATIVE CRUSADE

PRICE £9.99

The blurb on the box states 'The Great Leap Forward board games have been waiting for'. Well – that's asking for trouble from a pedant like me, isn't it! No – on second thoughts I won't deliver a lecture on the use of metonymy. Instead I

will try to assess what kind of a 'leap' you will be taking if you buy **Triumph**.

Take three competent games inventors. Shut them in a hexagonal cell, and tell them to produce a workable version of Draughts to match their enclosure, before they are released. An hour later they would emerge with something very like **Triumph**. We would have to make allowances for the quality of their artwork, of course, which in **Triumph** is really professional.

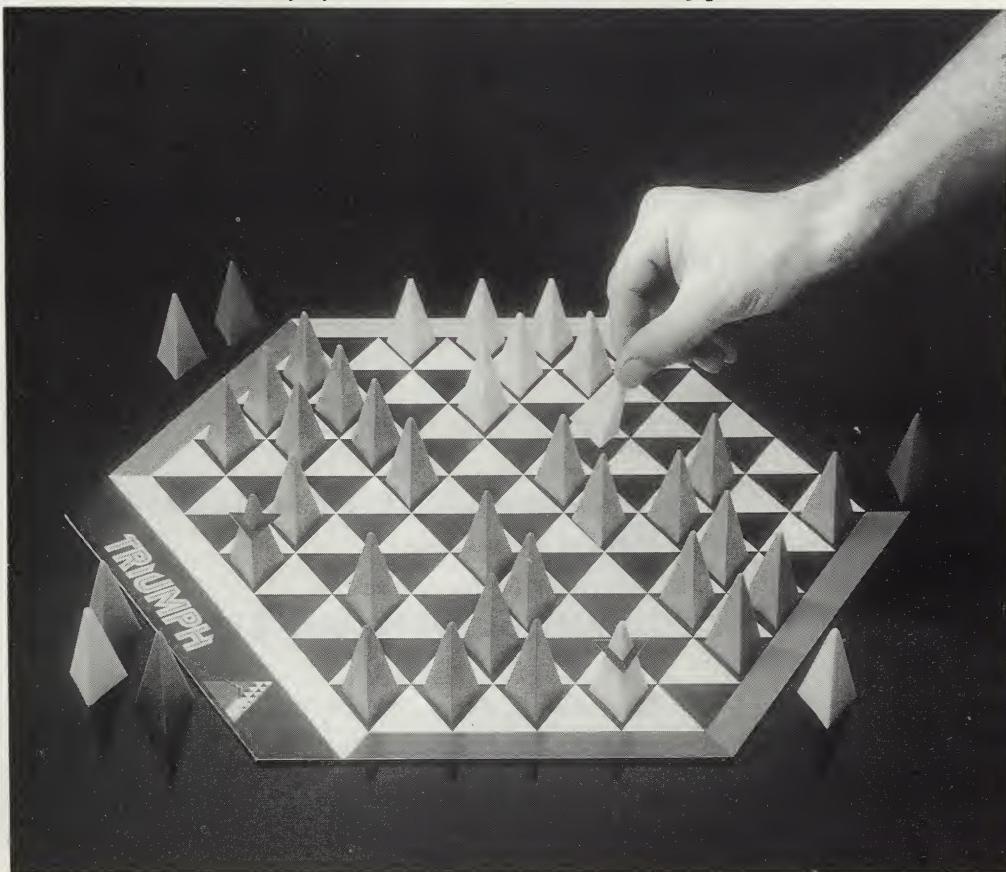
In the elegant box we find a folding hexagonal board – I wish I could say 'unfolding hexagonal board' – four sets of tetrahedral pieces and a beautifully printed set of rules. Yes, it's a game for two, three or four players – something which ordinary Draughts does not aspire to. And, as you would expect, the number of players affects the number of pieces used and the starting position. Further-

more the four player game requires you to reverse the board and use a layout with more playing points. The playing points, equivalent to the black squares in Draughts, are black triangles separated by white triangles. Such an arrangement is isomorphic (I said I was a pedant) to a hexagonal grid in which the cells are all neighbours of six other cells, except for those at the edge of the board.

Confused! It is not so bad once you start playing and is quite enjoyable. Being so closely based on Draughts it could hardly fail in this respect. Pieces take other pieces by jumping in the customary fashion, and when they reach the side of the board opposite to their starting side they are 'crowned' so that they can move in any direction. Before that, pieces are constrained to move in a 'non-backward' direction. There is a maximum of four legal directions for a move, and two directions are prohibited. What is troublesome when you are new to the game is the oblique angle of attack on your opponent's pieces. It is so easy to assume that you cannot be attacked in a given direction only to find that it is a legal direction for one, or more, of your opponents. Well, it's all part of the game and adds an element of surprise.

I mentioned that the pieces are tetrahedral. In other words, they are three-sided pyramids, and quite tall ones so that they can be picked up with relative ease. The indication that a piece has been crowned is a simple triangular collar which is placed around the king's pointed head.

There is little more I can say about a Draughts derivative. If you have a yen to play hexagonal Draughts, buy **Triumph**, but if you have a yen to take a great leap forward buy something else.



Eric Solomon

CHECKMATH

**DESIGNED BY
B J SPEIGHT**

**PUBLISHED BY
GRANT TRADING**

PRICE £5.95

**

This is a two player game copyrighted in 1968, so it's relatively ancient. Each player has ten counters bearing the numbers 1-9, 10/11. These start the game at opposite ends of a ten by ten squared board, the squares being marked with the numbers one to 100. The object of the game is to take all your opponent's pieces and these are captured, as in Chess, by landing on the square occupied by the opponent's piece.

Pieces move one rank forward and are constrained to move onto a square whose number is a multiple of the number on the

piece. Hence the 1-piece can move anywhere on the next rank, the 2-piece has five potential target squares, and so on. The piece marked 10/11 may move onto a square which is a multiple of either 10 or 11.

When a piece reaches the opposite side of the board from which it started it is crowned and may move either backwards or forwards. But it is still constrained to move only onto squares which are multiples of the number on the piece.

Checkmath is one of those games which an educationalist might applaud, but it bored me stiff. I will concede that it might be a good idea to play it several times with a six year old child, but after the age of seven it should be used only as a punishment. And why any adult would want to play it defeats me. Certainly the game demands some skill in arithmetic, and a degree of planning, but so does investing in the fat-stock market, and that offers greater enrichment.

Eric Solomon

More abstract games next issue.

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REVIEWS

WARGAMES



OF THE MONTH

ONSLAUGHT

D-DAY TO THE RHINE

DESIGNED BY
DOUGLAS NILES

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £14.95

As the title suggests, Onslaught depicts the gruelling efforts of the Allies' push from the Normandy beaches in June 1944 to the crossing of the river Rhine ten months later.

At first glance, this attractive flat box with its large SPI logo looks like an old game that has found its way back onto the shop shelves. A closer examination shows this to be a new game and I can only wonder why TSR chose to use an 'old style' packaging.

The components are nicely produced and the whole result is visually pleasing to the eye. The map, which measures 20" by 36", is mounted on a substantial folding board which gives a good feeling of quality. The counters are large and col-



ourful, each representing the divisions of the appropriate nations involved in this conflict.

The rule book is excellent. It is well set out and written in a conversational style that makes an easy read especially for the complete game novice. For those who have a good understanding of wargame procedures a special pull out centre sheet has been provided which is all that need be read prior to play. The nice part of the rule book is found in the last section under the heading 'historical overview'. This gives a full turn by turn narrative of historical events; as well as being informative it allows the players to compare their positions with the historical positions turn by turn.

Turn one covers the period June 6 to June 15, and the game set-up assumes that the invaders are already ashore. They control three beach hexes which must be protected as they are the Allies' only supply source until other ports can be captured.

The turn sequence opens with 'actions'. The Allies always get the first action of the turn, but thereafter both players must roll a die: the winner gets the subsequent action, and a tie causes the turn to end. This random method of deciding who will get the next action puts the players on their toes, forcing them to react immediately to situations as they occur, and removing 'total command' from the

players. Players will often find that by the time they next get an action, several new situations that require attention have arisen, and former plans must be laid aside.

There are three types of action, movement, combat and breakthrough, which is a combination of movement and combat or vice versa, thus allowing armour stacks to behave in their historic rôle of breakthrough and exploitation.

The high level of playability in no way compromises the game as an effective simulation. Its simple mechanics are effective and the player can concentrate on tactics without constantly having to refer to the rules. The player will often find himself in a dire situation and believe that defeat is close at hand, and yet a few turns later discover that recovery is possible. This is one of those games where a few mistakes will not cost the game, and in most cases players will be able to recover after errors.

In general, each game follows similar lines: breakout from Normandy, capture ports and cross the river Rhine. However, the unique sequence of play ensures that from the word go each game is played differently, which means the replay value is high.

The German 'bulge' offensive is catered for in the rules. When the Germans an-

nounce their offensive (once per game), they receive a boost in supply points and get the first action of the turn. Supply is not just important in this game, it's critical. Each time the player activates one stack, one supply point is spent. The Germans always receive eight points per turn except for the offensive bonus, and the Allies start with twelve points from the Normandy beaches. However, the Allies can greatly increase their supply potential by the capture of ports, in particular Antwerp, which becomes an important geographic feature for both players.

Good play depends on a firm grasp of supply. Both players need to understand the serious supply situation facing the Germans. Theirs is the task of good housekeeping, to balance the requirements for attack, manoeuvre and filling the west wall defences for the final assault against Germany.

Some of the turns will pass quickly without the Germans getting a chance to

spend many supply points and therefore some supply may build up. This will be useful, and make the Germans able to respond as required to counter Allied intentions. The Germans should keep some supply for an emergency (which seem to occur every couple of minutes) and will find it more efficient to keep units in stacks, as supply points are spent by the stack.

The rule book offers some advice to both players on play, but these are very general comments as the fluid sequence of play does not allow for detailed analysis. I would draw your attention to *Wargamer* 9, which has a good 'campaign analysis' by Steve Winter: nine well illustrated pages, and his observations are obviously based upon extensive play of the game.

One of my own favourite ploys as the Allied player is to drop one or more paratroop units into one of the unguarded ports (if there are any) around Calais. The fear of the German player that this cap-

tured port could be used as a landing facility for Allied troops to land in the rear of the German army, causes the Germans to divert resources (and supply points) to dealing with the problem at a time when they require a 100% effort in defending in Normandy against the breakout.

Onslaught is almost two years old and I fear that it will be allowed to come and go without wide acclaim. This game is just what the hobby needs at the moment: a solid design that serves as an excellent introductory game and also a superb game for regular wargamers. It plays well solitaire and can be played in an evening. Described as the first of the 'Lightning Series', I hope that more games at the same level follow. This game is a true classic, and I would strongly recommend it to everyone.

Norman Smith

Next issue Norman unveils a variant and some optional rules for *Onslaught*.

Napoleonic!

Following on from the favourable review of *The Campaigns of Robert E Lee* in GI #4, Mike Siggins now turns to two more Clash of Arms titles covering the Napoleonic period.

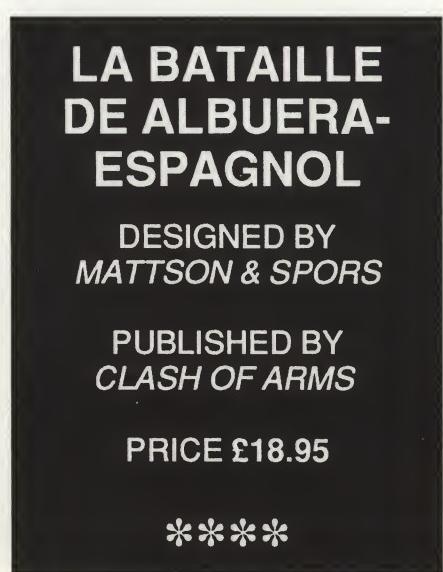
This dual release is a departure from the norm – while *Albuera* represents volume IV of the series of games which is rather grandly known as the 'Les Batailles dans l'age de l'Empereur Napoleon 1er', *The Emperor Returns* is the first in a new series: 'The Campaigns of Napoleon'. This latter series is to be added to in the near future by a huge Leipzig game covering the 1807 campaign in Poland. While more games, including Ligny and possibly Wagram, are also expected in the 'La Bataille' series, I note that the older titles (*Auerstadt*, *Talavera* and *Eylau*) are starting to disappear due to the limited print runs favoured by Clash of Arms. So now's the time to purchase those you've missed. Up until now, all the games in the 'La Bataille' series have been revised versions of the Marshal Enterprises grand tactical games originally printed in the

Seventies, each sharing similar rules and components with additional specific rules for each battle. Although *Albuera* clearly sticks with this battalion/regimental level theme, *The Emperor Returns* is an operational/strategic level design by the talented Kevin Zucker, which is based on his well established *Napoleon at Bay* system. *Albuera* covers a small but interesting 1811 battle in the Peninsula War while *The Emperor Returns* is concerned with the entire Waterloo campaign after Napoleon's return from Elba.

Albuera comes in the usual large flat box adorned with a fine painting of a French hussar. The components live up to the high standard that have become the trademark of the 'La Bataille' series. The maps are fairly low key but are very well rendered with stylized villages, forests and hills, and excellent lettering. From a design point of view, the maps are probably in plain colours to contrast with the counters, which are still up to the standards set in the very first games with full colour, gold and silver lining and even tiny eagles where appropriate. The overall effect is impressive and for many is the selling point of the games, giving much of the feel of miniatures without the hassle of painting. As I mentioned in the earlier review, Clash of Arms' counters are rather thin but I have recently seen a comment from the company explaining that this is purely to keep costs down to reasonable levels. The main fact is that they have so far stood up to normal handling so they must be considered quite serviceable.

PIDGIN FRENCH

Anyone who saw the very first Marshal rulebooks will know what a mess they were. The idea was to add game flavour by using a smattering of pidgin French which, combined with the equally badly



written English, left most players completely stumped. That, added to the inherent holes in the rules, meant that beyond the basics of movement and combat you pretty much made it up as you went along; the cavalry charge rules were a nightmare. Thankfully, Clash of Arms have got down to tidying them up a bit and they are now better than the old set and have some degree of comprehensibility. Unfortunately there are still several points which remain unclear, and also their organisation could be a lot better. These comments apply only to the standard rules supplied in all the games; the Albuera specific set is rather better and has some interesting ideas and a passable historical commentary. However, a major rewrite is definitely needed on the standard rules.

Rules clarity aside, the game system is still arguably the market leader in the grand tactical area. Its only real rivals are the now rather old GDW Eylau system and SPI's flawed Wellington's Victory, both of which have their own loyal fans. The Albuera system seems to capture the flavour of Napoleonic battles, allows for individual unit characteristics and is not unduly slow. Nevertheless, the test game we played was well into its fifth hour when the Allies decided to call it a day, and Albuera is one of the smaller games in the series.

BROKEN DOWN REGIMENTS

As one would expect, the system covers infantry, cavalry, artillery and the inter-relationships between the three arms. Each infantry counter is rated for troop strength, movement factor, morale, melee

strength and fire strength. The basic unit is the infantry regiment which, unusually for a game system, can be broken down into its constituent battalions. Suitable counters are provided to achieve this at a consequent trade off in fighting abilities. The choice is left to the general to decide how he wishes to deploy the troops. Morale, fire and melee are simple and work rather well. The system uses a 36 outcome chart and thus provides plenty of variety, which means the classic situation of a French column assault on an Allied line is at least a little unpredictable. This is well handled and the system shows no signs of inaccuracy.

FOLLOW THAT HORSE!

The cavalry system is almost a sub-game in itself. A complex but enjoyable charge and counter charge system accurately recreates the power of a massed mounted attack with infantry rushing to form squares and gunners and skirmishers fleeing for cover and, most importantly, the control factor. In the real battles of this period, if a cavalry commander unleashed his troops he had a fair chance of not seeing them again for a while. This was not often through casualties but the fact that once charging around, they were rather difficult to recall. This is handled cleverly in the game and adds lots of flavour. The basic battle scenario is quite straightforward and, because of its simplicity, is the only one provided, which does make for a 'long game or nothing' situation. The French have a strong infantry force of good quality troops with cavalry (including some very handy Polish Lancers) and guns in support. They are required to attack the Allied army

under Beresford, which is the usual Peninsula hotchpotch of veteran British and KGL units, adequate Portuguese and some rather dubious Spanish who are excellent only at running away at the crucial moment. The French are commanded by Marshal Soult and aim to clear the enemy from the field. This involves a broad front attack towards Albuera at the centre of the map. Albuera sits on a small river and there are two or three key bridges which can help both sides. The battle is close as the sides are well matched and there is plenty of room for flank marches and grand sweeping cavalry manoeuvres. The French have the initiative in deciding where to attack and must break the core of crack British troops to make headway. The Allies have the ever interesting problem of defending a natural obstacle while holding together a motley force of varying quality, and have the added problem of being outnumbered in cavalry.

Albuera is in many ways very similar to its 'La Bataille' predecessors but because of the smaller, balanced battle and the interesting and colourful troops present, it is a real winner. Very few games look as good as the Clash of Arms Napoleonic range and the system, pace of play and cavalry tussles all add excellent flavour. I think the only drawbacks are probably the length of time required to play a game to the bitter end (should it be necessary) and the rather vague rules. Those gripes aside, this is a game that represents an ideal sampler for the 'La Bataille' system and is highly recommended.

Mike Siggins

THE EMPEROR RETURNS

DESIGNED BY
KEVIN ZUCKER

PUBLISHED BY
CLASH OF ARMS

PRICE £18.95



Victory Games. His past credits have included Napoleon at Bay (AH), Bonaparte in Italy (OSG), 1809 (VG) and the big, almost unplayable and highly regarded Struggle of Nations (AH). All of these used variants on the basic 'Zucker' strategic system and were gradually refined and improved over the years to reach what many consider to be the best available Napoleonic strategy games.

The system attempts to portray the problems of moving and fighting an army of the Napoleonic era which include supply and attrition, army morale, leadership, intelligence and administration. In these aims the system works as well as anything that has gone before but that doesn't mean it is the last word in simulation.

The game is supplied in an identically sized box to that of Albuera with an equally attractive colour picture. The dif-

ference is that this box is edged with gold rather than the silver of Albuera, denoting the presence of Napoleon himself. A nice touch, I thought. The components are also of a high standard though the distinctive counters of Albuera are replaced by slightly more restrained, though still colourful, markers representing the various senior commanders active in the 1815 campaign in Belgium and their troops.

A feature of the Zucker system is that the troop counters are held off board on organisational displays, neatly showing their current strength in multiples of 1000 men. Only the leaders are present on the map, which makes for low counter density and useful limited intelligence effects, though the ability to cross-subordinate leaders and their units can make assessing one's force strength somewhat difficult at times. The map is attractive and is rendered in a similar though rather

Kevin Zucker has been quiet for a while after making a major impact on the Napoleonic gaming area initially with OSG and later with games for Avalon Hill and

more pleasing fashion than that of its stable mate.

The rules are presented in the same split style as *Albuera*; one booklet covers the standard rules and another covers the specific rules and historical notes. At this point the similarity ends as these rules are written in a reasonably clear and informative style and there is not a trace of Franglais to be seen. I wish I could say the same of typing and spelling errors which are rife. I suspect this indicates rushing and weak proof-reading.

The basic rules seem to be pretty much a straight lift from the earlier games that used the system and having already had the benefit of player feedback can be expected to work well. The historical notes are also rather above the standard fare and despite Zucker's rather highbrow style, they make for an interesting read. For those wishing to dig further into the background, it is safe to say that there is absolutely no shortage of books on the Waterloo campaign and the ensuing battle. Particularly good is Chandler's *Waterloo: The Hundred Days*.

STUCK IN THE BOGS

The game system is where *The Emperor Returns* stands or falls, and having played it twice recently I have to say that it very nearly works and the feel is right, but there are major flaws. The strategic movement system is based on the ability of the commanders to make a decision, motivate their troops and get them moving. The longer they march and the greater the concentration, the worse the attrition. What this means is that there are numerous small bodies of troops moving around at speeds that seem rather slow and have little chance of causing much damage.

The largest force permitted per hex is forty eight points (48 000 men) and if you saw fit to move something this size around you should win some battles, but the attrition would probably get you first. All this in addition to the constant need for supply lines means caution often outweighs any chance of Napoleonic flair. This of course largely depends on the player; if you don't mind seeing your army wither away then by all means march them into the ground.

The underlying point is that the rules don't seem to permit or encourage the type of moves that happened in the campaign; only the force march rule that permits movement in an opponent's turn shows any real substance. However, a neat point is that commanders move

around on the map face down, exposing only their national flag. This combines with a rule that permits the telling of porkies about force size, so the net result is that you have little idea whether it is Napoleon or a cavalry detachment coming towards you. There are pretty standard zone of control rules that soon sort this out for you by exposing the force, but by that time it may be too late.

PITCH AND RUN

Once the system eventually allows two armies to clash, the opponents decide on whether they wish to conduct either a pitched or pursuit battle. Both parties have to agree to allow a pitched battle which then produces the usual slugfest, whereas either player choosing pursuit results in that type of battle.

The glaring problem here is that once they get down to combat, there is no differentiation at all between the troop types. Each 1000 man strength point is equivalent to every other, whether they be Old Guard or Prussian Landwehr. Almost the only time the Imperial Guard benefit is in not suffering march attrition. The battles are therefore of a numeric nature, building in command, cavalry and artillery in addition to the poor old foot soldiers.

There has been much written on the subject of national characteristics and whether they should feature in games of this scope, or even exist as a quantifiable solution to game design. The question seems to be whether the French and British were better troops than their opponents and if it was due to factors such as command, training, morale and supply, all of which went to create the historical differences.

Theory aside, I am sure that, taken in isolation, 1000 veteran French line are more than a match for 1000 Dutch-Belgians, which this game does not show. Even Avalon Hill's *War & Peace*, which deals with the Napoleonic campaigns at the highest level, allows for the fact that the Prussians and others are generally poorer troops than the French and British. *The Emperor Returns* takes the concept to one logical extreme and allows for only minimal differences. Mr Zucker possibly feels that the larger numbers present in a typical battle will average out this type of anomaly, but I remain largely unconvinced.

CE N'EST PAS VRAI

This is a strange game, which in many ways has much the same strengths and faults as its predecessors. It works as a

strategic game but the tactical results remain dodgy. I feel it would be possible for someone with little historical knowledge to sit down and play the game and come away thinking 'that is what it was all about'. They would probably even have enjoyed it because the atmosphere is good and Mr Zucker cleverly creates a game environment that appears correct. But if you take a closer look and compare what is happening in the game to what happened in real life, the problems start to become evident. Troops do not move as well as they might, true Napoleonic strategies such as the central position are difficult to recreate and the battle system does not differentiate between troop types or allow one to create the battles that actually happened.

In the absence of new designs or self-made amendments to *The Emperor Returns*, we may have to live with it, at least until further games in the series appear, in the hope that at least some of the problems are resolved. On balance I cannot recommend this game to the people most likely to buy it; that is, enthusiastic Napoleonic gamers. Much of what the system offers is clever, deceptively atmospheric and it comes closer than many to its goal, but for those of you who want a true simulation the field is still wide open.

Mike Siggins

CHARTS

Wargames

- ① *Sniper! Bughunter* (TSR)
- ② *Imperium Romanum* (West End)
- ③ *Team Yankee* (GDW)
- ④ *Star Strike* (ICE)
- ⑤ *Battletech* (FASA)
- ⑥ *RAF* (West End)
- ⑦ *The Last Hurrah* (Avalon Hill)
- ⑧ *Desert Falcons* (GDW)
- ⑨ *Battleforce* (FASA)
- ⑩ *Red Storm Rising* (TSR)

Chart supplied by Virgin Games.

SCENARIOS

Firefights!

Welcome to the game of the film of American imperialism. New scenarios for *Platoon* from Norman Smith.

Night camp

This firefight lasts for five turns. Use five North Vietnamese chits and four American chits per turn.

① American set-up: the American player sets up first within the jungle area bound by roads M11 to L2 to F6 to G11. The Americans are encamped and asleep. They have two guards who can be placed anywhere within the camp boundary. In addition, the American player secretly places three claymore mines within the

same boundary. Fire support is not available. The American player may choose soldiers armed as follows; one M16 leader, one shotgun, one M60, and five M16s.

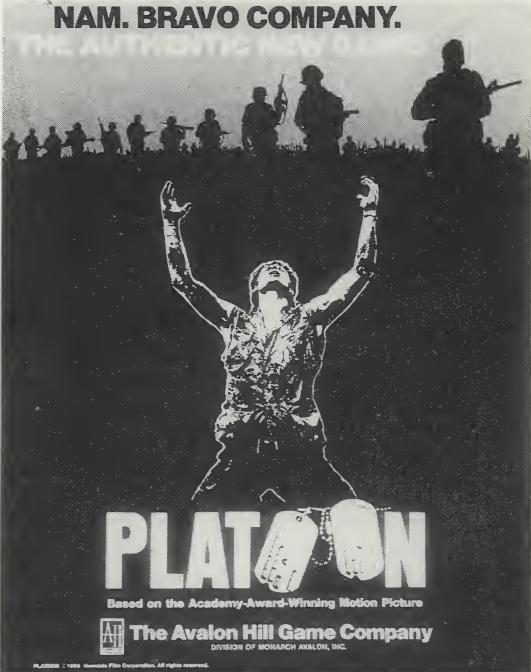
② North Vietnamese set-up: the North Vietnamese player sets up anywhere outside the American camp boundary. The following North Vietnamese soldiers are in play. One AK47 leader (+2, 3), two RPD, two AK47 (+3, 3), eight AK47 (+2, 3), four fakes. Fire support is not available.

③ Special rules: the American soldiers are asleep. Lay all the counters face down to represent this. Two of the soldiers are posted as guards and thus can act normally (they're awake). The first time a weapon is fired (including a claymore), the American player will be allowed to use any subsequent action chits to arouse sleeping soldiers. This is considered an action and the chit is considered spent. Each time this option is chosen roll a die for each sleeping soldier. A roll of 5 or less, and bingo! he's wide awake and ready for action. Stand him upright to indicate this.

The claymore mines cannot be activated by American units within the usual three hex radius. They may only be activated by units (of either side) entering the hex and triggering the claymore as a booby trap.

④ How to win: the North Vietnamese player gets one point per man exited from hexes T3 or T10, and two points per American soldier eliminated. The North Vietnamese player wins if six or more points are scored, otherwise the American player wins.

NAM. BRAVO COMPANY.



following American soldiers are in play: Tex and Rodriguez. Fire support is not available.

② North Vietnamese set-up: The North Vietnamese player sets up on any of the road hexes that run from K1 to M11. Fire support is not available. The following North Vietnamese soldiers are in play: one TT33 leader (+1, 3), one RPD, one RPG, one AK47 (+1, 3), and five AK47 (+2, 3).

③ Special rules: optional rules C1 and C2 are in effect.

④ How to win: the North Vietnamese player gets two points per American soldier eliminated and wins with a total of 10 or more points. Otherwise, the American player wins.

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Roadblock Tango

This firefight lasts four turns. Use four North Vietnamese chits and two American chits per turn.

① American set-up: the American player sets up first, placing a foxhole marker in hexes T10 and S4. One soldier is also placed in each of these hexes. The

In the *WARGAMES* section next issue:

Air Wars: Lee Brimmicombe-Wood takes to the skies in this special feature on air combat games.

Mike Siggins continues his romp through the green fields of France with more Napoleonic wargames.

Plus new releases from Attacktix reviewed.

STRATEGY SEMINAR

Brian Walker

One of the best introductory level wargames released for some time has to be *Red Storm Rising*, published by TSR. Indeed, the basic game is only a little bit more complex than that old favourite *Risk*, while the advanced game offers a challenge to the most experienced gamer. Despite the simple game mechanics of the basic version though, there is considerable scope for strategy as this article, focusing on the long version of the basic game with the variable ending, sets out to prove.

C'mon you Reds

The basic strategy of the Warsaw Pact is obvious; attack. Do it as often as possible, but not blindly. By the end of the ninth turn you could be pushed to hold that extra city should the game end. But if you're close don't worry too much as chances are his are turning to mush anyway. It should quickly become evident that the longer the game goes on, the stronger the pact becomes. But how to make the best of your superior forces? Like all such games much depends on what your opponent does, but let us assume he is going to concentrate on a heavy defence in central Germany. This should leave you some room for manoeuvre both in the north and south. To deal with the former first; don't expend too much energy trying to take Kiel. It tends to collapse of its own accord. If you regard living under a commie regime as a fate worse than death, pray you never have to rely on the Dutch and Danish NATO forces, which in the game are assigned to defend Northern Germany. This they do with all the force of a used tea bag. Once they have been eliminated, press on towards Arnhem and then don't look back until you reach Amsterdam, by which time you will be entitled to down a Heineken.

In the interim keep pressing away in the central regions and make like you're attempting a *blitzkrieg*, thus forcing your opponent to pour lots of reinforcements into these areas, though you're real aim should be an attack from the south to form a pincer movement as you also sweep down from newly conquered Holland. Don't worry too much about taking Mu-

Red Storm Rising

nich in the early stages. You should really be looking to head towards Stuttgart and Karlshure, working your way up when these fall.

The chances of NATO capturing and holding a Warsaw Pact city are pretty remote but must nevertheless be guarded against. Try to keep two units alongside most of the wall in the early stages, though a cunning strategy is to leave one area unguarded. Few opponents will pass up the opportunity to play the hero. Watch the mug as he pours through, convinced he's about to 'liberate' some commie city, when what it should be doing is making sure that the honest burghers of the Rhine don't have to choose between red or dead. Let about four tanks through before closing the gap and turning the infiltrators to pulp with your superior reinforcements. As well as diverting your opponent, this will severely weaken him as he'll probably send his best units in. General Custer, eat your heart out.

As to which units to use in the forefront, I prefer to use my strongest (+5) in the front line to expedite breakthrough attacks and get my opponent running towards the beaches quick sharp. If by the eighth turn it's close, and it usually is, make sure that all the cities you've managed to occupy are defended by two units. Remember; the only way these can be recaptured is via a breakthrough attack against a single unit.

NATO Nuances

Forget about air-to-air missiles, this is all about getting down with the grunts. The first thing to remember when playing the NATO pact is the objective. This is not to try and reduce Russia to rubble. Your role is a defensive one. Discretion, in your case, is very much the better part of valour. Stick all your weak units in the front line; cannon fodder, that's what they're there for. They'll slow the enemies ad-

vance, which is what you want, for your strategy is to play for time as much as anything else. Dream about taking a Warsaw Pact city by all means, but don't take it any further. You can make a pretend attempt at capturing Pilzen (no jokes about only being here for the beer, please), but just see it as tying up some of the Pacts resources. Don't get serious about it. The reinforcements will just pour on and turn you to mush.

Many of your own reinforcements are French, unfortunately. Let's hope these guys cook better than they fight. The temptation is to pour them into the central regions as back up, but really you should let them stay close to the French border (they get homesick) to repel any incursions from the south. You'll find Karlsruhe provides a decent base from which to defend the south and central regions. The Dutch reinforcements are little better than the French so keep the clogies close to the windmills and move them no further east than Osnabruck, unless they can prevent the Russkies utilising the 'fast movement' rule, in which case keep them moving east.

Around turn seven or eight, a mass retreat is usually called for. Retreat all units back two spaces, into cities if possible. Watch the look on Johnny Red's face. He's got all these tanks, but nothing to attack! (the pact have to attack first then move). This is a great delaying tactic and a chance to regroup your by now depleted armies.

Like the Pact, always try and defend your cities with two units in the last few turns. It may also be prudent to put your best tanks forward around this time as you'll be facing attacks from all sides, so if one attack is able to breakthrough immediately you can be sure another will try to. By sending your strong units to the front you not only delay the pact's advance but give yourself a good chance of destroying some of his units. If the Pact hasn't achieved the victory conditions on turn eight, and you've got two units in all cities you control, this means you will win on turn nine (assuming the game ends) irrespective of what the Pact achieves.

Whatever the result you'll find the game great fun to play and a fine introduction to the advanced game.

PLAY-BY-MAIL

Play it by mail, Sam

Some company, somewhere, is sending a letter to you. Brian Walker returns to sender

It could be said that Blackpool is one of the first places you would expect to find a games company whose products run the gamut of architectural destruction; from the bombings of *It's a Crime*, to the post holocaust mayhem of *Warlord*. The buildings of Blackpool inspire these kind of feelings. What used to be a working class holiday resort with a kind of seedy charm, is now the home of KJC Games, probably the largest play-by-mail games company in Europe. Computer moderated PBM is undoubtedly one of the fastest growing fields in gamedom, with companies and games coming and going like managers of Newcastle United. Amidst all the turmoil though, KJC has stood firm. Perhaps it was because they had the world's most successful PBM game, or maybe it was just the sea air. To find out, I took a tram along the prom and hopped off at the office of KJC supremo Kevin John Cropper (geddit?). So how long have you been receiving these kind of letters, Kev? 'It all started in '81. I used to run a postal game of *Crasimoff's World* through Mitre Games, this was back in 1981. Nothing was computer moderated then. It was really just a hobby. What changed things was a rave write up the game got in *White Dwarf*. We had about 400 letters, which at that time was quite a lot'. 'This provided the impetus for us to start KJC. The first game we ran was *Capitol* which is still going strong.' But when did you start getting into crime, Kev? 'We took on *It's A Crime* around 1985. This was a really big step for us as we had to take on more elaborate computers to handle the input. Also, the Americans were only just starting running their first games when we acquired the licence, so the initial programs were far from perfect'. What about the theme of the game, hasn't that given you any problems with the press? 'We Expose Gang Rape Gamers', can you imagine the headlines? 'We're not that well known as yet, though we do get the occasional letter from mums saying "Why are you

sending this stuff to my son?" To which we could reply: "Because he asked for it." We never send out unsolicited material and we always state that the game is unsuitable for children.' Apart from *Crasimoff's World*, which has now been licensed, all your games have been bought in. Any plans to produce your own?

'Yes, as a matter of fact our programmer David Bolton has just finished *Warlord*, which will be our first in-house design. We are hoping this will appeal to wargamers, as there is considerable scope for strategy, as well as combat, naturally.' Naturally. As to the future, Kevin reckons *Monster Island* will bring even more fantasy gamers into the exotic world of play-by-mail. After the phenomenal success of *It's a Crime*, who can blame him?

The games

Earthwood: Fantasy game where players take the role of a mythical leader, challenging other players for domination. One of the smaller games, with a maximum of 24 players per game.

Starter package £5 (includes rules and two free turns). Turn fee £1.50

Capitol: From the team that brought you *It's a Crime*. This is a continuous science fiction game of tactical warfare and interstellar empire building with no turn-due date. Sounds like a black hole.

Starter package £6. Turn fee £1.75

It's a Crime: The most popular PBM game in the world. Each player has a gang roaming the streets of a lawless city (London?). Set fire to things, take drugs, hang out, and get down. Yo! A tactical game for armchair yobbos. Starter package free. Turn fee 75p/£1.50



It's a Crime! Arrest the hairdressers!

Trolls Bottom: Who can honestly say they have never wanted to control a Troll? Now's your chance in this fun game set on a magical island.

Starter package free. Turn fee 75p/£1.50

State of War: Futuristic American civil war game where each player takes the role of a governor of an rebellious American state and attempts to beat the (Federal Government) computer, as well as the other players.

Starter package £6. Turn fee £2

Warlord: KJC's first in-house designed game. This is a post-apocalypse strategic war game modelled on an earlier PBM game *Casus Belli*.

Each game has 100 players. The winner is the first player to own thirty cities and hold them for three turns. Alliance victories also possible. To be reviewed in full in a future issue.

Upcoming

Monster Island: A new fantasy game from the team that brought you *It's a Crime*.

For more details write to: KJC Games, PO Box 11, Clevelys, Blackpool, Lancs FY5 2UL

REVIEWS

rolegames

THE SENTINELS ROBOTECH II: THE RPG

DESIGNED BY
KEVIN SIEMBIEDA

PUBLISHED BY
PALLADIUM BOOKS

PRICE £10.95



One day, when Earth's mighty armada (including favourite heroes) was doing good deeds in a distant galaxy, cuddly blue Terra was conquered by some nasty aliens called Invid (boo, hiss). When the mighty armada began to return the Invid began to wipe it out (naughty aliens). In the end there was a huge scrap and all the Invid baddies died (hurray). So did 98% of the goodies (oops). Then another bunch of Invid turned up and conquered Earth again. Don't worry though, 'cos them earthies are the goodies (and it is an American game) so they haven't given in yet. In fact that's who the player characters are: heroic goodies. Now wasn't that a surprise?

FLIMSY BACKED

This Palladium book looks like all the others – a flimsy softback with a curled-up cover. Not a format that I find particularly attractive, but one that ought to be cheaper than the alternatives. There are at least five Robotech books not counting the scenario books, videos, etc that go with them. This, the second book, does not explain the background very well and generally assumes that you know the cartoons/comics and simply want the detail on one particular bit. You will need at least book I in addition to book II in order to play properly, and probably the lot if you wish to include all of the major races.

Working on the assumption that you are supposed to have all of the books to hand in order to play, then it isn't too bad. Most of the book is made up of info on one area of the Robotech universe in Palladium rules terminology. As the game is officially licensed, the author has had access to the design notes of the original creators of the series and so the detail included feels authentic. Unfortunately it is not complete. For example, if you want to use the Invid you also need book V. All of the sample scenarios require information not included in this book.

NOT A COMPLETE GAME

The impression that I was left with was that, while the background may be fascinating if you understood it, I had missed the introduction and wasn't going to catch up. Fine, you say, this is the second book. Nowhere does it say that you need anything else to play, a fact that becomes manifestly obvious as you begin to read. 'This book is not a complete game in itself' should be written on the outside. But it isn't. Whether this is due to sloppy editing or a deliberate policy to encourage sales I don't know, just bear it in mind; buy this and you've either committed yourself to buying several more of these books, or thrown the money away.

Next we have the rules. Palladium games all have very similar, often identical rules. This is, I think, a good idea. It's a pity that they insist on selling you them repeatedly rather than selling the rules and backgrounds separately, but a step in the right direction nevertheless. Sadly the rules themselves aren't too brill.

DOWN TO EXPERIENCE

Sentinels is class and level based with a limited skill selection.

I almost left that statement as the damning indictment that it is without elaboration. However...

'An Experience Level System is used for two reasons; 1) To fit in with the other Palladium Books games and 2) because I've found it to be a fun and realistic system. After all, nothing can substitute for

real experience, especially in a combat situation.'

Of Mr Siembieda's two points, the first makes reasonable enough sense given the manner in which Palladium publishes its games. For the second, the concept of an experience point system being 'fun' is unusual to say the least. That one could be 'realistic', well, all I can say is that Mr Siembieda evidently lives in a pocket universe all his own. An example of his 'reality'; suppose a character has a few great ideas, kills some baddies, is played well (in character), then they will rise in level. The character will then be a little bit better at everything he did before however irrelevant to the deeds that gained the level. He will also be less likely to die if shot. Please someone, anyone, explain how clever ideas make people bullet-proof.

RENAISSANCE MAN

It seems to me that the use of character classes and experience points have achieved a sort of pseudo-religious status and that questioning their validity is somehow blasphemous. Selling them as the most expedient solution, an easy thing to write, is reasonable enough; calling them realistic is, to put it politely, being economical with the truth.

I won't bother you all with the humdrum detail of the rules (I can complain about Palladium's rules for pages), I will simply sum up.

Smart people will be able to role-play adequately with *Sentinels*. Why 'smart people' would buy it in the first place is another matter.

As a final note, another gem from the author...

'Remember, the REF and the Sentinels are NOT just killing machines, but liberators. Honorable, peace loving individuals who fight for freedom...'

Mr Siembieda, does the word 'PROPAGANDA' mean anything to you?

Jake Thornton

THE FOURTH SUCCESSION WAR

BATTLETECH MILITARY
ATLAS VOLUME 1

DESIGNED BY
BOYF PETERSEN Jr

PUBLISHED BY
FASA

PRICE £9.95

*/***

The two alternative star ratings given are for rolegamers and wargamers respectively. As the ratings show, this 130 page softback is of little use as an rolegame supplement. As a military history 'in strategic terms', which is what it calls itself, it is borderline adequate.

The first 100 pages are a description of the Fourth succession war from Aug 3028 to Jan 3029. Over a third of this part of the book is made up of maps. Large, full-

colour, entirely superfluous computer generated maps. The vacuous tedium of these maps matches the text perfectly.

The editor has failed to include an overview map to show the various campaigns in their correct context. This leaves the maps on a one-per-action-per-planet basis which just isn't good enough. A single map of a simple military engagement is (strategically-speaking) unnecessary; a single map of a complex engagement is never enough. In total then, the description of the war is neither detailed enough to refight engagements, nor general enough for you to make up your own. It hovers uncomfortably between detail and generality and, because of this, will need much work before being really useful.

Thirty pages at the end of the book are given over to unit breakdowns which are tedious in extremis, as tradition dictates. They are useful though, if you want to know unit organisations and equipment for wargaming with them.

Sadly the whole book smacks of being written to a rather unimaginative formula. Unless you *really* don't have the time, or you simply *must* have everything FASA produce, I wouldn't recommend you buy it.

Jake Thornton

CHARTS

Rolegames

- ① AD&D 2nd Ed Player's Handbook (TSR)
- ② Rolemaster Compendium 3 (ICE)
- ③ The New Hope (Star Wars, West End)
- ④ Earth/Cybertech (2300, GDW)
- ⑤ Lords of Middle-earth 3 (MERP, ICE)
- ⑥ Other Space (Star Wars, West End)
- ⑦ Tales From The Ether (Space: 1889, GDW)
- ⑧ FR7 (AD&D, TSR)
- ⑨ Space: 1889 (GDW)
- ⑩ FRC2 (AD&D, TSR)

Chart supplied by Virgin Games.

GURPS supplements

*Our resident GURPers glance
over the latest clutch of releases.
GURPS material is published by
Steve Jackson Games.*

MAGIC

DESIGNED BY
STEVE JACKSON

PRICE £7.95

GURPS Magic is a reworking of half of the old GURPS Fantasy book, which is

now out of print. Both contain about the same number of spells, but GURPS Magic does introduce some new ones, as well as new spell classes and colleges, and it expands most of the sections present in the previous sourcebook (such as the rules for alchemy).

There are also some new areas: the rules for improvising spells on the spur of the moment are superbly thought out and make logical sense. On the other hand, GURPS Magic still includes magical items (a hang-over from D&D, with little precedent in mythology), and almost half the book is taken up with a list of available spells.

If you use GURPS Fantasy already and are happy with it, stick with it. If you missed it the first time around, GURPS Magic is a worthwhile buy.

James Wallis

FLIGHT 13

FOR HORROR/SPACE

DESIGNED BY
W G ARMINTROUT

PRICE £4.95

This adventure seems initially to resemble the 'Airport' series of movies, but quickly moves beyond that: the main problem is not how to get the plane down safely, but why is the airport deserted and the city of Austin (co-incidentally where SJG is based) under attack by very strange creatures? The players may come

up with some strange theories but the final revelation is even stranger. On the way they will encounter weird transforming alien beasts, small carnivorous children and people who melt.

While the concept is good and the adventure well-constructed, the ending is disappointing for both players and referee and the whole adventure will not last much more than two sessions of play.

James Wallis

STARDEMOM FOR SPACE

DESIGNED BY
GREG PORTER

PRICE £4.95

The planet of Anson, on which this scenario is set, resembles Earth all too closely for my taste. The plot is also fairly familiar, involving an archaeological expedition into jungle. The subtitle of the scenario runs: 'Spacefarers unlock an ancient secret'. All is not quite as it seems, but it's fairly close.

However uninspiring the background and plot, the scenario is ably executed, with enough complexities and quirks to fill out a few gaming sessions. While it's not the kind of thing to buy for ideas, if you run a reasonably standard science fiction campaign **Stardemon** provides a useful stop-gap scenario which could set up several recurring plot themes.

Paul Mason

ICE-AGE

DESIGNED BY
KIRK WILSON TATE

PRICE £4.95

There are few areas that role games have not yet explored, but prehistoric man was one of them – until recently. The appeal of playing a character who cannot count higher than five is not readily apparent,

but whether you're thinking of cavemen against dinosaurs, anthropological campaigns or moaning black monoliths, **GURPS Ice-Age** lets you do it all.

The book consists of details of the development of Homo Sapiens (players can be anything from Homo Habilis onwards), their culture, shamanistic magic, a bestiary, an adventure and ideas for campaigns. It is the latter section that makes the book: **GURPS Ice-Age** can become conflicts between Neanderthal Man and Cro-Magnon Man, an Edgar Rice Burroughs 'Lost World', a sourcebook for primitive planets for **GURPS Space** or any SF rolegame, or even 'Fred Flintstone – The Rolegame'.

GURPS Ice-Age is well researched, well presented and makes fascinating reading, with a surprisingly large potential for adventuring. In fact, the only area that isn't covered are the ice-ages themselves!

James Wallis

MOUNTAIN WEST

AADA ROAD ATLAS
VOL.7

DESIGNED BY
JEFFREY D GEORGE

PRICE £4.95

This is the seventh part of a reference work for both **Car Wars** and **GURPS Autoduel**. Half of it is comprised of a description of Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and Deseret (formerly Utah) in the 21st century. This information is strictly factual: road conditions and numbers of hospitals, along with small road atlas maps.

The rest of the 64 page book describes the organisations mentioned in the first half; notably BLUD (Big League Unlimited Duelling) and the fanatical Mormons who inhabit Deseret. There is also a 14 page adventure. Like the rest of the Road Atlas series, 'Mountain West' is well-researched and written in a pleasantly tongue-in-cheek style: useful for anyone with an interest in this type of game.

James Wallis

WITCH WORLD

DESIGNED BY
SASHA MILLER & BEN W MILLER

PRICE £7.95

Andre Norton's Witch World books have been hitherto almost untapped as a source for rolegames. In this sourcebook the books have been interpreted well; authority and knowledgeability are apparent throughout. The Witch World is a 'traditional' sword-and-sorcery setting in some ways, but like most of the 'early' settings it was invested with a certain vibrance. Much is about what I'd call individual politics – the fate of nations being decided by remarkable characters. In this respect the setting is perfect for a role-game that's about a little more than constant battle.

Fans of Witch World should certainly buy this book. Avid devourers of fantasy fiction would probably also find it appealing.

Paul Mason

UPDATE

DESIGNED BY
STEVE JACKSON & DAVID LADYMAN

PRICE £4.95

GURPS Update is not a sourcebook: it is simply a listing of the rules changes between the 2nd and 3rd editions of the **GURPS** rulebook. It includes the new sections of rules as well as every single tiny change in wording, and is quite exhaustive. Since Steve Jackson Games seem to be intent on updating all their supplements to the 3rd edition rules, **GURPS Update** is a must-have if you own 2nd edition **GURPS** and aren't prepared to splash out on the new edition. If you already have the 3rd edition, or don't play **GURPS**, it'll be no use to you at all.

James Wallis

JAPAN FEATURE



A scene from myth . . .

Up on a hillside, four curved swords protrude from mounds. Below them, three warriors pay last respects to their fallen comrades. They know that this time, as ever, it is the farmers who are the true victors: the bandits have all been slain, and the villagers can at last complete the harvest free from the threat of starvation.

It could be the end of a story from almost anywhere in the world. Indeed, this particular story has been told about the American West, and even about a future beyond the stars. But it is most powerful in its original: the *Seven Samurai*. This is the most widely known *samurai* film, and it is a fitting place to begin a look at the possibilities of rolegaming in medieval Japan.

In this, the first part of a special feature on Japanese rolegaming, we cover the most popular game in detail, and give some ideas on capturing the elusive mystery of the Orient.

In next issue's concluding part we look at the other Japanese games available, and try to build up the atmosphere still more. So keep your *katana* sharp!

Way of the warrior

Ian Marsh reviews the 'classic' Japanese rolegame, and makes a few general observations on the genre.

Ninja and samurai are perennial favourites as character classes in *Dungeons and Dragons*, but in the pre-Oriental Adventures days these super-assassins and honourable rippling machines fitted uneasily into the game. It took the arrival of *Bushido* to remove them from a cultural bastard of a background and place them firmly where they belonged. In the transition they turned from tools for power-gaming into believable characters that could be roleplayed.

Where they belonged was Nippon, the Japan of legend. As assassins and warriors they joined the Japanese equivalents of priests, magicians, thieves and martial artists: *ninja* and *bushi* met *gakusho*, *shugenja*, *yakuza* and *budoka*. But any similarity to *Dungeons and Dragons*'

system is superficial: the character classes may be the same, the characters may progress in levels, and there are goblins and trolls to fight using a ponderous twenty-sided dice based combat system, yet all of this is bound together with a social background that decides, more than the rules system, how characters can act and react.

When it was first released, *Bushido* was something special in the roleplaying world. It had a readily accessible background to which mythological beasts, spirits and heroes could easily be added. And it had a background essentially alien to Western games players: it allowed them to relate easily to the period in which the game was set while throwing cultural barriers in the way to prevent rapid mastery of the game.

DEDICATION PAYS

Despite its popularity (FGU's bestseller), *Bushido* is destined to remain a minority game, and like many FGU games it has suffered from a remarkable lack of support. But its advantages over newcomers such as *Oriental Adventures* for AD&D

BUSHIDO

DESIGNED BY
BOB CHARRETTE &
PAUL HUME

PUBLISHED BY
FGU

PRICE £13.95

and *Land of Ninja* for *RuneQuest* 3 are its dedicated game system which simulates the oriental way of living and thinking, and that there are experienced referees and players available from whom newcomers can learn.

Bushido works as a game because it succeeds in its objective: to recreate the atmosphere of playing in the legendary Japan of the *samurai*. It also does so heroically by having a range of levels from

one to six and placing unexceptional opponents below level one in ability: **Bushido** introduced the concept of having extras who collapsed at the touch of a sword. Those players who wished to recreate the Japan of *samurai* movies could therefore do so. But the restricted range of levels isn't the main limitation to character advancement: when played with the correct social restrictions, it is the customs of Nippon which limit the characters and add to the challenge of playing the game.

NIGHT'S DARK EMISSARIES

Ninja, for example, do get very unpleasant to deal with. But a character who admits to being a *ninja* or is careless and leaves tell-tale signs that he is a *ninja* will either quickly end up dead or become useless for the mission on which he has been sent. It is possible to play a *ninja* and have this fact known to the players – not the characters! The *ninja* simply disposes himself as a porter, peasant spearman, or even a tiger-beater and the other characters accept him in that role.

Only when it is safe to use *ninja* skills and tricks, that is when no one is looking, does the *ninja* act true to character. And if he is discovered he arranges his 'death' and later returns as a distressed farmer's daughter, a homeless peasant, or whatever is suitable to fit himself back into the group.

Playing **Bushido** is like being Japanese: what you truly are or feel remains beneath the personality and views you present to others. And it is this which provides a role-playing challenge and which in part will ensure the game's popularity. It is also an aspect of the game which will put many gamers off the idea of playing a Japanese rolegame.

Japanese society's restrictions do limit the composition of a group, favouring a

group of similar specialists. A typical band of adventurers will therefore consist of a large number of *bushi* – the *samurai*, *ronin*, and peasant warriors – with support, usually a Buddhist priest, and possibly a *budo-ka* among the low status members. Or a group could be composed of *ninja*. That is where the easy mix of character classes ends. Magicians and *yakuza* just aren't suitable for group play, although they can make fascinating characters in their own right.

It might seem that adventures with groups of more than a few players are impossible, or at least limited to the equivalent of dungeon-bashing but with a Japanese background. While it's true that to keep the flavour of a *samurai* movie some fighting is expected, those social restrictions should ensure that there is a fair degree of plotting and plot to be unravelled by the characters.

This is helped by the social station of the characters. Starting characters will almost unavoidably be subservient to someone else, usually a non-player character; they are under orders to perform a task, and those tasks which they are sent to tackle will simply be regarded as their duty.

BUCKING THE SYSTEM

The exception is a group of characters composed of *ronin* or disgruntled peasants who chose to become bandits. Unfortunately that isn't the way to succeed in a land where duty to one's master is the main driving force, unless the characters manage to topple those at the top from power. Even this, however, will be

largely dependent on plotting and subversion rather than force of arms.

Being told to undertake a certain adventure reeks a little of fantasy adventurers receiving commands to retrieve artefacts or persons a, b or c from temple or arch-villain x, y or z but has some social justification. And compared with the D&D referee, the **Bushido** referee has more resources available to him to make the adventure more than it seems.

Social interaction is one of the game's strong points and can often spark off adventures with little input from the referee: suspicion of double-crossing or mistaken interpretations of omens and events on the players' part can prompt the referee to create new events to confound them or temporarily to throw them into a different adventure. The other binding force of the game is the way the rules system works.

Games players have long been divided on whether a dedicated or generic game system is best. **GURPS** and **RuneQuest** are representative of the generic approach as their core systems have been applied to games whose backgrounds span time and space. They provide workable structures for these games, but add little to the atmosphere. **RuneQuest** combat, for example, just doesn't give the right feel to oriental combat: it is far too slow. Dedicated systems score because the way they work adds to the game, and **Bushido** is typical of this.

Character advancement, for example, depends on two factors: *on* – honour – and *budo* – experience points. *Samurai* can kill as much as they like to gain *budo*, but unless their exploits become known or their value is recognised the characters will remain at low levels because their *on*



is low. It can be argued that restraints in the mechanics of the game shouldn't be necessary if the players roleplay their characters, but at least **Bushido** doesn't make over much of this, unlike **Pendragon** which takes the rules' limits on player behaviour to extremes.

KENDO? CAN DO

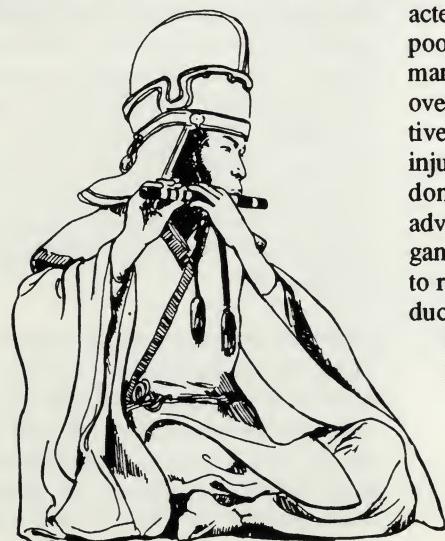
The combat and related skills system works simply and quickly: it allows multiple strikes, critical hits, differentiates between lethal and subdual damage, and allows characters to learn specialised techniques. And special effects also come into combat: those incredible leaps performed by oriental heroes are there for all characters to learn, and the technique of arrow-cutting – parrying missiles aimed at the character by using a hand-to-hand weapon – adds to the feeling that there is something special about the character.

Combat dispenses with to hit tables, with an opponent's armour counting as the penalty to a character's weapon skill, and speed and agility of a character determine when and how many times he strikes in a round. The critical hit and fumble tables add colour to the combat system without slowing it down too much, and the rules take into account the nobility of the sword as a weapon.

Martial skills might appear to be all that a game which encourages its players to follow the way of the warrior would concentrate on. **Bushido**, however, develops the peaceful side of the warriors it creates.

BUSHI OR BUTTERFLY?

Fine arts are used to enable characters to show refinement of their inner spirit. The skills take in aspects of Japanese culture such as the tea ceremony, calligraphy, meditation and *haiku* poetry, and complement the social structure of the game. If



Bushido did nothing else, it at least brought social skills into a role-playing game, something which its contemporaries largely lacked. Without them **Bushido** would have been incomplete and a great many opportunities for adventure would have been lost.

Not all contests in Japan are martial; in court the fine arts take over but the competition and rivalry is as keen. Through poetry and acting it is possible to comment on actions or people while concealing the message from those to whom it is irrelevant. And demonstration of a refined inner self can gain respect: Buntaro's performance of the tea ceremony to make peace with his wife Mariko in the TV series of *Shogun* is an example.

For a character to advance, therefore, the player must develop more than martial skills to make the most of the background while remaining true to it.

Magic, too, receives the Japanese treatment, although it retains much of the feeling of a revamped magic system from D&D. It does, however, avoid a direct translation, so the non-magicians shouldn't feel like they are being accompanied or are up against Gandalf with a bad case of jaundice. Magicians follow schools of magic corresponding to five elemental forces: wood, metal, water, fire and soil. Each school has specialised spells, and all this adds to the difficulty of working out what a magician is capable of doing. A magician isn't limited to learning one school of magic either, although progress is slow. The fact that a successful magic skill roll is required to cast spells also prevents the game from depending over much on instant magic.

DEATH AND GLORY

Priestly powers work in much the same way as those of the *shugenja*, although compared with the equivalent D&D character class, the cleric, the *gakusho* is a poor relative. **Bushido**, however, like many other roleplaying games doesn't overcome the weakness that this supportive character is needed to heal all the injured warriors, something which seldom seems to play a part in heroic adventures on film. But a death or glory game would have been as objectionable to role-players when **Bushido** was introduced as it would be now, although

Bushido would perhaps be better described as a death *and* glory game!

Ranged against characters are creatures ranging from natural and legendary beasts to supernatural beings. The range is



limited but true to its source; anyone in search of new monsters to adopt into other games will be disappointed by **Bushido**, which has its own goblins, trolls and ogres among more exotic legendary beings. And there are the *kami*, the gods of Japan, whom characters are advised to treat with respect. A small selection of creatures it may be, but they present interesting challenges to characters.

Bushido developed the idea that a game should be more than a rules system by making culture a strong element in play. It succeeds admirably in doing so, but its attractions to mainstream roleplayers are limited. The lack of support in the way of scenarios (the exception, *Valley of the Mists*, is an exciting and challenging mini-campaign) means that anyone who buys **Bushido** has to develop their own scenarios, making the game less appealing to referees who have little enough time to run games as it is. It is similar in some ways to its contemporary games, but different enough to cause confusion due to its differently structured rules which present essentially similar information in an unfriendly way. And as a minor point, the rules are riddled with typos.

It's a cult game and nothing is going to change that. The latest versions of those cultural bastards of games which form the mainstream products of the games industry are more familiar to Western games players and will always be played in preference. All of which is a shame for **Bushido** genuinely presents a role-playing challenge.

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JAPAN FEATURE

More than skin deep

Jake Thornton suggests that the secret of Japanese gaming is good role-playing and a short dose of reading.

Mythical Japan is a very different place to game in. Or at least it should be. Setting games in the background simply to justify *ninja* or similar 'super-warriors' misses out on more important aspects of Japan: its history, and mythology.

JAPAN AND EUROPE

On the surface, the Middle Ages in Japan were much like Europe's. The peasants lived off the land. A ruling caste of warriors lived off the peasants. Both groups of peasants were suitably downtrodden and exploited. Both groups of warriors followed honour codes; chivalry and *bushido*. However, if you make the common mistake of assuming that the samurai are just knights in silly costumes, then you miss the point.

Parallels between Japanese and European history and culture are many, but mostly they are superficial. Role-playing should be about playing the rôle and that doesn't just mean wearing different clothes. Playing a rôle means getting *inside* the character. The motivations of the character, whatever he, she or it, is, are what makes that character different from all of the others that you play, and *this* is what you should concentrate upon.

Remember, boys and girls: external differences do not define a character, they reflect it.

CONSISTENCY

OK, imagine that you're a *samurai* in feudal Japan. What's it like? What's different from being a D&D fighter? Well to start with, the world you live in makes sense.

European-based fantasy games contain an unruly hotch-potch of creatures and religions nicked from Greeks, Romans, Vikings, Gauls, Lewis Carroll, and so on. Just as there are niches in an ecosystem so there are niches in a mythology, and the duplication of candidates to fit each

niche leads to an inelegant and confusing background. This is finely suited to the 'zoo dungeons' of the bad old days, but the hobby has matured since then (I'm told). Japanese games are (supposed to be) based on a background which really existed (the 'myths' being real to those who lived then). The greatest of *samurai*, Miyamoto Musashi, wrote the classic text on *kendo* in 1645. The *samurai* tradition is rooted in the Kondei system established in 792. Centuries of continuity and coherence show the Japanese feudal system to be a workable one. What then of the 'unreal' aspects of the game, the supernatural?

MYTH AND BELIEF

The religions of Japan are its fount of mythology. Most of the creatures that a character may find in a game are related to Shinto or Buddhism. Minor deities, restless spirits, and temple guardians all feature in the Japanese mythos. *real* people lived with these beliefs for centuries so we know they make sense.

Shinto is an animistic religion that attributes life and character to all parts of nature, not merely the human. Buddhism preaches the immortality of the soul, and its reincarnation in any living form. These religions together emphasise the importance to the Japanese of the inner self. It is no surprise then that they should develop their culture around this.

(Whilst we're here I thought that I'd slate *Oriental Adventures* for mixing Chinese and Korean mythology with the Japanese. Just as AD&D takes all of the different European mythologies and religions and boils them down into a nondescript grey pap, OA ruins several different creeds.)

So our imaginary *samurai* lives in an ordered universe, what else? The other difference is the Japanese strength of spirit.

THE GREAT ULTIMATE

The perfection of the inner force, or *ki*, of a character is an end in itself. It shows the harmony between the character and his surroundings that all strive for. The ability to manipulate one's surroundings is a byproduct of enlightenment, as it were, not the goal.

Because souls and spirits are invisible they tend to take a back seat to killings and treasure. In Japanese mythology this is wrong. In Japanese games it *should* be wrong.

This emphasis of inner force pervades all of Japan's mythology.

Japanese history and mythology are fundamentally different from their Western analogies. Playing *Land Of The Rising Sun* like C&S is a waste of time. If you are going to bother with the appearance of mythical Japan then you ought also to deal with the deeper issues that form that appearance. The bonus is like the difference between running a pregenerated scenario and one that you created yourself. The more you empathise with the ideas involved, the better the atmosphere will be. If you don't understand the reasons why the Japanese are different, then they *will* be knights wearing silly costumes.

THINK JAPANESE

What does all this mean for gamesters? Referees should exploit the coherence of background; source books on real history can be liberally cribbed without fear of contradiction. We all live in a coherent world, we may not like it but it usually makes sense. If the fictional world we build for our player characters is as coherent, then it is that much easier to 'suspend disbelief' in. The players should concentrate on 'thinking Japanese'. Not a helpful comment but I haven't the space to explain properly. Realise that the *samurai* are *not* the same as western knights and you are half way there. Read and reread *A Book Of Five Rings* (by Miyamoto Musashi, translated by Victor Harris). The greatest *samurai* of legend not only really lived but also really wrote. What better guide to being a *samurai* could you possibly wish for? ☐

Next issue in the Rolegames Japanese Feature:

Paul Mason reviews the other Japanese games—all of them supplements for established systems—while Dave Morris asks why they're all so similar.

LETTERS**REBOUND****The big easy**

I was interested to read in your Earl's Court report that MB are to release a 'new' game called **Easy Money**. I bought this game in a car boot sale a few years ago. The rules were copyrighted 1935 and 1974!

Denis Arnold
Felixtowe, Sussex IP11 9QG

According to Mike Grey, who designed the game for MB, Easy Money is an entirely new game and bears no resemblance, bar the name, to its precursor.

Sister trucker

I was interested to read in the May issue the spirited defence of **Mr Trucker** by one Garry F White. I don't know the game and the style of rebuttal did not endear it to me.

My point, tangential though it may be, is that calling this game **Mr Trucker** is unnecessary. It implies, yet again, the exclusion of women from the experience upon which the game is based and, therefore, from the game itself.

Mr White might like to reflect how many more than 35 000 000 trucking males this might have appealed to if he had just called it **Trucker**.

Elsewhere in your magazine, and in the games world generally, gender stereotypes appear to be mercifully rare. I like this. The pneumatic, wire-bra'd, axe-wielding amazon image is too hard an act to follow for yours truly.

Judi Moore
Milton Keynes, Bucks MK3 6BY

Vote for the Führer

I have enjoyed *Games International* so far but would prefer less coverage of war-games (which I don't play) and more of general games of all types.

I enjoyed the article on election games very much. However, I'm sad there was no reference to **Führer**. I played this game at a club once, some time ago. It was based in Germany in the days of the Weimar Republic (specifically, the early 1930s). Of the six parties competing for seats under the system of proportional representation, four were virtually identical. However, the National Socialists



Write to: Games
International, Lamerton
House, 23a High Street,
Ealing, London W5 5DF

(Nazis) and Communists had extra ways of winning votes – street gangs. Do you or any of your readers know of this game? I'd love to play it again, better still own a copy.

Reverend Duncan Myers
Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BY

We, too, would like to find the Führer, but as Simon Wiesenthal has been searching unsuccessfully for decades, what chance have we got? Can any of our readers shed any light on his whereabouts?

Any old iron

I read with interest the story of 'Iron Mike' Siggins's nickname – *Sumo*. Although your explanation was plausible I fear it was incorrect and based on a misheard word. Mike's nickname is really *Suomi*; which nickname he has acquired because of his strange belief that he is in fact the reincarnation of Field Marshal Mannerheim. Consider the facts: why does 'Iron Mike' never remonstrate when losing? – because the Field Marshal is desperately trying to remember the Finnish for 'I am going to rip your tongue out!'

Just had to set the record straight.

Charles Vasey
The Wasteland that is Art
East Sheen, London SW14 8JY

Trumpet call

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on producing the best games magazine I have ever come across (even

better than the old *Games & Puzzles*). I feel that the magazine's greatest strength is that it covers such a wide range of games. I am also impressed by the high standard of the reviews. I wish you every success in the future.

Paul Berridge
Hove, East Sussex BN3 6EL

Thanks for your support, and thanks also to the many other readers who have expressed similar sentiments.

Fly catch

With reference to your puzzle from *Enigma*, this is the *Bristle-fly* which takes in water from underground in the Arabian deserts, possessing a series of vertical tubes. This disposes of clues one and four. Clue three about stiff hair is also covered as they are bristles flying about in the breeze. Clue two is covered by the trouser fly being bristly, this conveying a sensation of a rough doormat around the genital organs.

If this isn't right, it deserves a consolation prize!

Erni Redstaffe
Stevenage, Herts SG1 1HE

*Wrong and right. A copy of *Mastermind* is on its way to you.*

Family frustrations

I find it most frustrating when, after reading about a game in your excellent magazine, I can't find a clue as to where to get it. At the moment I am chasing *Mafioso* and *Metric Mile*. I am sure other readers must experience the same trouble. Perhaps a list of manufacturers would be possible, with their addresses or phone numbers, if you can find the space.

R Appleton
Darlington DL3 8JP

Mafioso was originally produced in a limited edition, though we understand it has been licensed to a major manufacturer, so next year should see it more widely available. *Metric Mile* was produced by Lambourne Games who advertised in the same issue (#4).

Generally manufacturers prefer not to deal with the public direct. Almost all of the games mentioned in our magazine can be obtained through Just Games or Esdevium, who, when they do not have the item in stock, will be pleased to order it for you.

Free classifieds

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BLACKROD Wargames Society have regular fortnightly meetings. All types of games are played including historical figure wargames, fantasy role-playing games and all types of board games. New members are welcome with or without any previous experience. For further details contact: Trains & Things, 170/172, Chorley New Road, Horwich, Nr Bolton, Lancs. **T** 0204 669203 or 691895.

EVERSHAM Role-play association. Established four years. Every fortnight, any games played. Contact Paul **T** 0386 48202.

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GLC (R.I.P.) Wargames Club meets alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays (May 3, 11, 17, 25, 31) in room 88, County Hall, on the South Bank, SE1 (nearest tubes Embankment and Waterloo). 6.30 till 10.00pm. Miniatures, two player board wargames, Warhammer 40K, Pax Britannica, 1830, etc.

KCPFRPG, North London, have meetings every Monday, from 6.30pm to 9.45pm. If you're human, elf, dwarf or just about any other race, and you're between 16 and 25, then contact us straight away. We play AD&D, Rolemaster/MERP, Marvel Superheroes, Robotech, Call of Cthulhu and other games. Experienced and non experienced players welcome. Contact Bil, Naomi or Vince **T** 01-253 6776. Or write to Darren Rogers, c/o KCPFRPG, 92 Central Street, London EC1V.

NEW MALDEN & SURBITON games group meets every other Monday at the Railway Hotel Pub, Coombe Road, New Malden, 7pm till closing time. Miniature figure wargames include Vietnam, Warhammer 40K and others. Board gamers and role-players welcome. Contact Peter **T** 01-942 5624.

NOTTINGHAM AND DERBY Games Club meets every Thursday at the Queens Walk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham. 7-10.30pm. Contact Mick Haytack **T** 0322 511898.

SIGMA GAMES CLUB meets every 2nd, 4th, and 5th (if applicable) Sunday of the month at the Intervarsity Club, Bedford Chambers, King St. Covent Garden, London. 3-10.30pm. Games played include Empire Builder, Tallisman, Titan, 1830, and many more.

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MIAMI GAMING CLUB seeks new members. All types of games. Meetings are once a week from 7pm to 11pm, Thurs or Fri at 7200 SW 7th St Miami. Contact Rex **T** 264 9752, or Steve **T** 271 5418.

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SCHENECTADY WARGAMERS ASSOCIATION: regular meetings and weekend conventions, tournaments of Axis & Allies, Empire Builder, Machiavelli. Role-playing too. Contact: Eric Paperman, 418 Vliet Blvd. Cohoes, NY 12047. **T** 518 237 5874.

WASHINGTON GAMERS ASSOC. meets monthly, and publishes a bimonthly newsletter (\$5 for six issues). Contact Dennis Wang, 2200 Huntington Ave, Alexandria, VA 22303. **T** 703 960 1259

WINDY CITY WARGAMERS meet twice a month. Miniatures and board wargames, plus newsletter. Louie Tokarz, 5724 W 106th St, Chicago Ridge, IL 60415. **T** 312 857 7060.

GERMANY

SPIELRATZN at the Gross Wirt pub every other Friday, Winthrstr. Munich 19, Germany. For further details contact: Bernd Brunnhofer **T** 089 264150.

FANTASY WORLD Role Playing Club in Munich. For more info contact Detlev Motz, Vorholzerstr. 4, 8000 Munich 71. **T** 089 795244.

Castle, April Cottage, Prey Heath Close, Woking, Surrey GU22 0SP.

WANTED DESPERATELY, any issues of *Games & Puzzles*, *Gamer*, *Games Gazette*. James **T** 0904 704595 after 7pm.

WANTED DESPERATELY: Waddingtons Starships and other old games. Rudolf Rühle, Burgweg 33, D5300 Bonn1.

GO - oriental boardgame. British Association, membership: Brian Timmins, The Hollies, Wollerton, Market Drayton, Salop TF9 3LY. **T** 063084 292.

WANTED: Games enthusiasts, Bournemouth area. Prefer strategy games but anything interesting con-

CONVENTION DIARY

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MANORCON, July 7-10, 1989 at High Hall, Birmingham University. Host to the Universities Diplomacy tournament. Also other boardgames and a dash of sport. £6 registration and £14 B&B. Contact Richard Walkerdine, 13 Offley Road, Hitchin, Herts SG5 2AZ.

SENSATIONCON '89, August 11-13, 1989 at Forbes Hall, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Boardgames and sports games - no fantasy. Weekend ticket £8. One-day tickets £4. Contact: Ellis Simpson, 95 Ormonde Crescent, Netherlee, Glasgow G44 3SW.

DRAK CON '89, August 12-13, 1989 at the College Dining Room, Northern College of Education, Hilton Drive, Aberdeen. Events include AD&D and Railway Rivals tournaments. All proceeds to famine relief. For details, SAE to S Douglas, 13 Springbank Terrace, Aberdeen, Scotland AB1 2LS.

CLANCON IV, August 18-21, 1989 near Belfast. Small scale, good fun, plenty of the real amber nectar. Details from Gordon McDonald, Benbecula, 3 Taylor Park, Scroggy Road, Limavady, Co Londonderry BT49 0NT. **T** 0547 64328

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SPIEL '89, the Essen Games Fair with expanded InterTeam tournament, at the Grugahalle, Essen from the October 17-22, 1989.

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ATLANTICON, July 20-23, 1989 at the Hyatt Regency, Baltimore. More details next issue.

DIP-CON XXII. America's biggest Diplomacy tournament. For further details contact Larry Peery, PO Box 8416, San Diego CA 92102 USA. **T** 619 295 6248.

sidered. Possibility of forming club. Please contact John Johnstone, 18 Hood Crescent, Bournemouth BH10 4DD. **T** 0202 518245.

FOR SALE: *Games & Puzzles* 1-34, *Miniature Warfare* vols 14, *War Monthly* 150. Offers: D Wilson, 15 Chester Way, Boston, Lincs.

ANYONE INTERESTED in starting a Sheffield games club, possibly to play every other week. Howard, **T** 0742 462469

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